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THOMAS DIBDIN,

Engraved by H. Meyer: from a Drawing by Wageman.

THE
REMINISCENCES
OF
THOMAS DIBDIN,
OF THE
THEATRES ROYAL,
COVENT-GARDEN, DRURY-LANE, HAYMARKET, &c.
AND AUTHOR OF THE CABINET, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

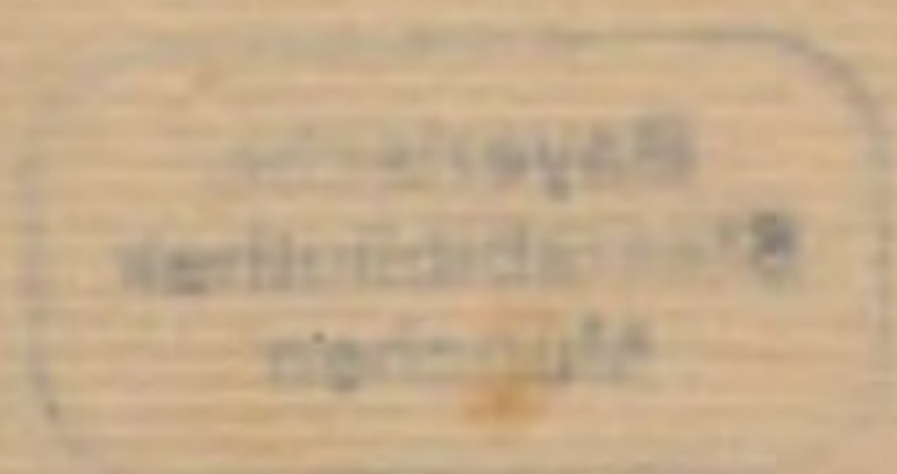
VOL. I.

LONDON :
HENRY COLBURN, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1827.

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PRINTED BY A. J. VALPY,
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

TO HER,
WHOSE UNIFORM KIND AND EXEMPLARY CONDUCT,
IN
THE CHARACTERS OF
WIFE AND MOTHER,
HAS, DURING THE PERIOD OF MORE THAN
THIRTY YEARS,
AMELIORATED INNUMERABLE DIFFICULTIES,
AND ENHANCED EVERY GOOD THE AUTOBIOGRAPHER
HAS EXPERIENCED,
THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED,
WITH
SINCERE AND GRATEFUL AFFECTION.



TO HER

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CORRECTIONS.

In vol. I. page 257, the name of Mrs. Siddons is accident-
ally inserted for that of Mrs. Litchfield; and in vol. II.
page 244, Mr. Southby should have been named relative to
the pantomime of Gog and Magog, instead of Signor Paulo.

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
THOMAS DIBDIN.

CHAP. I.

FROM 1771 TO 1785.

When I was a little tiny boy.—SHAKESPEARE.

Commencement of my life—Fears, hopes, and promises to avoid future digression—Amazing chronological coincidences—Birth, parentage, and education—(Life, character, and behaviour to come presently)—Characteristic introductions to professional life—Musical tuition—School instruction, &c. &c.

ON the last day of June, 1826, I am beginning my Life, with the most sincere wish that I had arrived at the end of it. When I first contemplated inflicting these retrospections on a public whose kindness I have so frequently ex-

perienced, I saw nothing in perspective but unvaried sunshine. Every little disaster I may have to relate (said I) will be read with the tenderest sympathy, and every whimsical incident will furnish a "*paysage riant*" in my biographical landscape: but when I reflect how many of my former contemporaries, to whom some features of my narrative would probably have proved interesting, are now no more; when I reflect how many of those who remain have lost all taste for theatricals; how many other "Reminiscences," "Recollections," "Lives," "Times," and "Memoirs" have, in the short space of a twelvemonth, anticipated more than half my store of anecdote, and satiated the town with real good things,—I begin to fear, that unless the reader's

—— appetite

Can grow on what it fed—

he will here find but a wearisome "Life" of it, unless he set out with a determination, as I always do on a journey, to be as pleased with every thing on the road as possible.

The author of nearly two centenaries of dramatic attempts will obtain very little credit with any class of readers by professions of diffidence, and gain no sort of critical consideration by venturing to ask it; I shall therefore frankly state, I have numerous and cogent reasons for essay-

ing this task, and putting inclination and vanity *hors du combat* : if I find the book worth writing, it will be my interest, as well as my duty, to endeavour to make it worth reading.

Some of the difficulties and comforts of the undertaking have flitted across my imagination in the following “questionable shapes:”—

First comes “I,” and truly the greatest enemy I ever had ; and which, to a writer who professes abjuration of all personalities, is a most dangerous and seductive pronoun, whose egotistical and impertinent interference on all occasions will not only be an eye-sore (no pun, upon my honour !) to the reader, but a tiresome recurrence to myself ; so much so, that unless I have all my eyes about me, (as I dare not emulate the style of Cæsar, and write in the third person,) I shall have to say with the school-boy “*ego-met* I myself,” in every line.

Next comes that intuitive partiality for the important personage described and represented by the aforesaid self-sufficient pronoun : it is not in human nature to get rid of it ; and I defy the meekest of the meek to assert with truth, whether, in all self-representations or narratives of his own actions, he is not invariably of counsel for himself ;—or that even should he tell a story to his own disadvantage, he has not a sort of

sneaking kindness, lurking under his humility, for the reputation he expects to acquire of ingenuousness and candour : accuse me as you will, reader, of illustrating an old proverb about “measuring corn,” and “one’s own bushel,” &c. &c. I can resolutely assure you, however the following memoirs may seem to contradict the assertion,

I am but man,

and not exactly the most perfect of my species ; and therefore you must judge of I, while talking of I, *cum grano salis*.

Somebody says, somewhere, or something very like it, in an old epitaph,

His history you may thus comprise :—

Born, dead, and buried—Here he *lies*.

And so do most folks who write their own memoirs ; memory, in matters of self, is so deceitful. Yet I have one security to offer my perusers ; most of the main points in my story corroborate themselves so completely by their notoriety, that were I even inclined to let human nature lead me astray, the certainty of detection would be sufficient to preserve my honesty.

The third grand obstacle opposed to my undertaking is the dread of criticism : observe, I deprecate it not, although I tremble ; for cri-

tics, (and they know it,) whether they decide from their seats of judgment in the pit, the salon du café, the public reading-room, or private chambers in the inns of court, are not a whit honester than I am.—“Indeed! that is a bold,—I may say a daring assertion.”—Well, Sir, upon the hypothesis that you may be a critic, I’ll give you my reasons—reasons, of which you are already too conscious: for allowing thee the best intentions in the world, or that thy heart may be even softer than thy head, thy pen plucked from the plume of a pelican, or that thine ink shall contain no gall (nutgall excepted) towards an author whom thou hast neither seen nor heard of,—yet wilt thou, in spite of thyself, be a bit of a rogue, either to the subject thou hast undertaken to dissect, or to the bibliopolist *for whom thou art at work*, or to thy reader, or to thine own opinion: for either thou art a politician, a sectarist, a saint, or a sinner; a hater of, or a partial patron of theatricals; or thou hast an interest or no interest in the verdict thou art about to give: either thou art proudly independent, or reclinest, like a literary adjective, against some substantial Mæcenas of a MURRAY, leanest on a LONGMAN, art caught by a CONSTABLE, or carried away by high consideration for a COLBURN; in all or any of which posi-

tions thy judgment will be swayed ; and if thou art not damned for thy partialities, “like an ill-roasted egg, all on one side,” or not in any of these predicaments, but dependest, with laudable intention, on thy judgment alone,—thy natural probity is still as likely to be misled by that human judgment, as by any of the opinions, patrons, inducements, or obstacles I have enumerated. No critical writer was ever so fond of showing us the dirty side of ourselves as Rochefoucault ; yet self-love, the object of his satire, was alone the prompter of his Philippics.

Were it possible to escape with a whole skin from the good intents of criticism,—or even supposing we bend to them with placid resignation,—yet imagine the countless quicksands, rocks, and shoals which lie in the road of an autobiographer while speaking of his contemporaries—the difficulties here seem insurmountable—so many charges of partiality, such unavoidable appearances of prejudice ; that in order to steer as safely as possible between the Scylla of one and the Charybdis of the other,—simple facts, without opinions, shall be my rudder and compass ; and that I may not be terrified by the foregoing, and some hundred other frightful stumbling-blocks in my path, which I intended to describe, I will fairly shut my eyes upon them all, and very

briefly enumerate the two or three symptoms of encouragement which hope points to as the cheerers of my labour.

This attempt is preferable to writing a play, because, however ill I may acquit myself, I shall hear nobody hiss: when once written, my "farce of real life" will go before the public without the previous formalities, vexations, and disappointments, attendant on waiting some months for a manager's decision, reading to the actors, experiencing the pleasure resulting from rejection of characters by some, and the commands of others to revise, omit, add, introduce songs, inflate speeches, and manufacture jokes, at the risk of the licenser's veto, or the sudden indisposition of performers who dislike their parts; nor shall I, when I have finished a scene, be importuned to spoil it by a superogatory exit speech, calculated to give eclat to one character at the expense of all the rest; neither shall I have to experience that awful moment, when the indescribably interesting balance is suspended between the verdicts of "Off! Off!" or "Bravo! Bravo!" during the important appeal, generally made in the form of—"Ladies and Gentlemen, under the sanction of your kind approbation," &c. &c. The Ayes or the Noes generally interrupt

the remainder ; and the author is sent home, either over-elated at transitory success, or too much blamed, depressed, and perhaps ashamed of failure, which frequently emanates from circumstances unconnected with the demerits of the piece, and which should always stimulate to a cool examination of causes, and a determination, by renewed exertions, to profit from past experience.

Reader, my story will henceforth commence, and proceed with very little, if any, digression ; and it may perhaps prove how very correct the author of Robinson Crusoe was when he wished to inculcate, that few real misfortunes happen to us, but through our own misconduct. Should any hypercritic of the society of saints ask, what is the utility of publishing the history of a runaway prentice-boy ? I shall think him highly ungrateful, as he will in my mishaps find subject for a month's preaching : some good may surely be extracted from the history of a mind, the activity of which has been productive of both good and evil to the subject (not the hero) of these Memoirs : careless readers will now and then laugh, hypocrites pretend often to pity ; but a just application of every incident will be morally made by

those of the benevolently-wise, who have the enviable faculty of discovering

Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

I wish with all my heart I could boast, with an illustrious managerial contemporary, of being descended from Hamlet, or even Drugo de Bellenden; but, alas! I have never been able to trace my family lineage higher than the Conquest, nor indeed quite so high. The reader will be much enlightened when he learns that there is but one family in England (as I have been told) of the name of Dibdin, which cognomen they originally derived from, or gave to, a village called Dibdin or Dibden near Southampton, in which city my father was born. The race of PITTS, from whom my mother sprang, ("heu stirpe!" say the radicals) is certainly illustrious in political annals; yet it will hardly be credited that I have never been able to obtain either place, pension, or title, though, as will hereafter be seen, my great uncle of that name always intended me to be a Lord Mayor. I was born in the year 1771, on the 21st of March, which my grandmother (a great antiquarian) informed me was the anniversary of the battle of Touton, fought a few years back by some of our ancestors of the White

and Red Rose factions : it has since become the anniversary of the battle of Alexandria, and of the death of the, not at that time, immortal Abercrombie. George Colman the younger was born on another 21st, the anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar, and the death of the now immortal Nelson : what an amazing coincidence, and what a difference between what the world gained and lost on those occasions ! My father was the celebrated and undervalued Charles Dibdin ; one of my godfathers no less a man than David Garrick ; the other Mr. Frank Aikin, of Covent-Garden Theatre ; and when I add that at the age of four years I was led before the audience of the Theatre-Royal Drury-Lane by Mrs. Siddons, it will be owned that both my natural and professional lives commenced very dramatically. My mother was daughter of Mrs. Pitt, who for nearly fifty years was a highly respectable actress at Covent-Garden Theatre : many yet live who remember her very superior comic talent : she was the original Deborah Woodcock and Lady Sycamore in *Love in a Village* and the Maid of the Mill : her Widow in the Commissary was an exquisite example of the best school of acting. Dorcas in *Rosina* was first played by her ; and at the age of threescore and twelve she was encored in

another Dorcas (in Garrick's *Cymon*) in the song of "I tremble at seventy-two," on the boards of that theatre she had graced for half a century. She was a woman of sterling worth, and stamped her image on my memory when I was little more than an infant, by teaching me to read in Goldsmith's *History of England*, and giving me four raps on the knuckles for misspelling that quadruple number. My birth reminds me of nothing but mortality: the house in which I was born (as if I had been a *Damiens* or a *Ravallac*,) is pulled down: the name of the street is now changed from humble "Peter-street" to the dignified designation of "Museum-street, Bloomsbury-square." It is singular that I was not named after either of my godfathers: I derive the name of Thomas from my father's brother, who was captain of a merchant vessel, and was father of the Rev. Thomas Frognall Dibdin: I was called John, in compliment to the late John Richards, Esq. many years secretary to the Royal Academy. My elder brother, who was born during the run of the "*Padlock*," had been christened Charles, Isaac, Mungo—the first from his father; the second from Mr. Bickerstaff, author of the "*Padlock*;" and the last from the principal character in that farce, so ably sus-

tained by my father for considerably more than one hundred nights.

One of my godfathers still lives ; but Mr. Garrick, and a hamper of wine he sent on occasion of the christening, are no more : my father, mother, grandmother, godmother, and an aunt who graced the ceremony, are also dead, surviving only in the recollection of their admirers, and the very sincere regrets of the author.

I have mentioned my having been introduced to the boards of Drury Lane by so distinguished a cicerone as Mrs. Siddons. It happened thus :—Shakspeare's Jubilee was revived at Drury Lane in the year 1775—6, and an extraordinarily beautiful boy being wanted to represent the god Cupid, I was (of course) selected : Mrs. Siddons personated Venus, and Mr. Siddons appeared in the pageant as Macbeth. I have no doubt, reader, but that were you to see me now, you would quote George Colman's line in John Bull—

How you are altered !

and, if I thought it would go no further, I would ingenuously own I think I am. Be that as it may, I remember being seized with an indisposition which kept me away from the theatre, during which period the son of the goddess

was personated by a Master Mills—I could have killed that boy: but when I returned, Mrs. Siddons received me with great kindness, and said, what I am sure was sincere,—“ I did not like Master Mills so well as I do you.” On the first night of my appearing in the Jubilee, I perfectly recollect being led by my mamma Venus to Mrs. Garrick’s room behind her box, and bellowing like a bull calf, because I was, for the first time, separated from my dear real mother: and whether or not it was intended as an omen, that in poetic life my energies should be curtailed of “half their fair proportion,” I cannot say; but this I vividly remember; one of my wings dropped off “of its own accord,” and the very first words I recollect having heard Mrs. Siddons utter, were,—“ Ma’am, could you favour me with a pin?” This was addressed to Mrs. Garrick’s attendant, who supplied what was wanted, and, as soon as I was once more qualified to fly, carried me down stairs in her arms.

As a proof (if such were needful) of Mr. Garrick’s kindness to children, I recollect that at the nightly conclusion of the Jubilee, tarts, cheesecakes, and other pastry were very liberally distributed to the juvenile corps, who personated fairies, &c. in which number my bro-

ther Charles (since so well known to the public) was included; and Mr. Garrick himself, on those nights, stayed, for the pleasure he felt in witnessing a due distribution of said bonbons.

An anecdote of my great godfather, which I believe has never been seen in print, was lately told me by a friend who had it from the late president of the Royal Society, and will not, I hope, be considered out of place here.

When Mr. West was about to paint the Death of General Wolfe, Mr. Garrick called on him, and offered (from a wish to serve the artist, whom he held in high esteem) to sit, or rather lie for him, as the dying hero: at the same time throwing himself on the ground, he began to die, as Mr. W. related it, in so true, so dignified, and so affecting a manner, that the painter interrupted him with—"My dear Mr. Garrick, I am fully sensible of your kind intentions; but so far from the assistance you offer being likely to serve me, it would do me the greatest injury."—"Eh! eh!" said Garrick, "how? how?"—"Why, my dear sir! were it to be known, when I exhibited my picture, that you had done all this for me, whatever merit it might possess would be attributed to you." Mr. G. immediately acknowledged the justice of the remark, and Mr. West had reason to be pleased with himself for

declining this assistance, from the undivided applause subsequently bestowed on his picture. Mr. West some time after remonstrated with Roscius for attiring Horatius, the Roman father, in a dressing-gown and perruque in folio, and offered him the model of a Roman toga. "No, no," said Garrick, "I don't want my house pulled about my ears: Quin dressed it so, and I dare not innovate for my life." On being further advised to dispense with the modern full-dress uniform, and adopt the tartan in the character of Macbeth, he replied:—"You forget the Pretender was here only thirty years ago; and, egad! I should be pelted off the stage with orange-peel." However high the authority from whence these trifles are related, it is certain that Garrick began that reformation of stage costume which Kemble afterwards completed.

When I was stage-manager of Drury Lane under the committee of five, the Earl of Essex did me the honour to copy an unpublished letter of Garrick to his friend Sir William Young, and send it me, as exhibiting what Mr. G's sentiments were relative to an innovation on Shakespeare which was afterwards relinquished:—

"I have ventured to produce Hamlet with alterations: it was the most impudent thing I ever

did in all my life; but I had sworn I would not leave the stage till I had rescued that noble play from all the rubbish of the fifth act: I have brought it forth without the grave-diggers, Osric, or the fencing-match. The alteration was received with general approbation beyond my most vain expectations, &c. &c.—David Garrick.”

“ January 10, 1773.

“ P.S. I shall play Lear next week, and Macbeth (perhaps) in the old dresses with new scenes the week after that, and then, exit Roscius. I wrote a farce called the Irish Widow in less than a week.”

I was afterwards taken by my grandmother to see the magnificent funeral of him whose talents it would be presumptuous in a pen like mine to attempt to eulogise. My father concludes his History of the Stage by saying

I drop the curtain at the death of Garrick.

My curtain, however, is scarcely up; and when it is, you, perhaps, will have reason to say,

Spectatum admissi risum teneatis ;

and I wish, with all my heart and soul, it may be the case : if you laugh *at* me, it will be for your own benefit ; and if you laugh *with* me, it

will be for mine ; and while we can raise a laugh in turn, neither of us will be the worse for it : so now to my task.

When I was about eight years old, I was, for the sake of musical tuition, and in the hope of making me as clever a man as my dad, placed in the choir of St. Paul's cathedral, and in the family of Mr. Hudson, a highly respected lay chorister, and master of the juvenile *quire*, as Dicky Suett (who had also belonged to it) used to call it. I was taught in the most scientific way how to *solfa* and feed blackbirds : the one I soon did very well, with the exception of being occasionally a semitone too flat or sharp ; and my feathered protégé I had like to have done *for* by nearly choking him. Mr. Hudson was a very kind instructor, and his daughter a very excellent practical musician, with an impassioned partiality for a brown blackbird in a white wicker cage, which outsang all the pupils, and drowned even the cockney noises of Benet's-hill, Doctors Commons. This feathered first singer was daily hung out at a back window, which (as the French term it) *gave* into the quadrangle of the Heralds College. A tall boy, high in favour with Miss Hudson, was commissioned to feed the bird ; which commission he transferred to me, and I made it over to ano-

ther. Rigby thrashed me when the bird was not fed, and I thrashed Clark for not feeding it; Rigby being as much my senior as I was older than Clark: all this of course improved us amazingly in our music. We were about ten fellow-pupils; four were allowed by the dean and chapter for the *cantores*, and four for the *decani* side of the cathedral, two extra being permitted in case of illness or accident to the others: of this number, he who fed the blackbird best, and taught him to sing with most success, became a family favourite. Unfortunately for me, though many years afterwards elected poet laureat to the *ad libitum* beef-steaks (which are always under-done), and an avowed consumer of the article which gave name to the Society,—I yet entertained a decided antipathy to meat that was quite raw; consequently, being rather “dainty-fingered,” as I was told, with respect to cramming the sable singer, my voice in the Cathedral yet too young to be heard, and not being old enough to break into any thing fashionably guttural,—I asked my mother’s leave to go to a “real school;” and after having been taught the gamut and good behaviour, which were conscientiously inculcated,—I improved, for the next twelvemonth, under Mr. Tempest, of Half-farthing-lane Academy,

Wandsworth, where I learnt to speak bad French at dinner time, (and very good dinners we had!) and to attain very common-place accomplishments during the rest of the day.

It was my good fortune, however, to be removed from the indulgent cockney boarding-school education of this establishment, to the tuition of Mr. Galland, a hardy Cumberland man, and a thorough-bred classical scholar in the North of England, who taught Virgil,—

Arma virumque cano ;

or, as one of my school-fellows translated it,

With a strong arm, and a thick stick.

In my journey from town, while the stage-coach stopped at Newark, (and passengers were then allowed plenty of time to dine) two lads, who were going to the same school, walked with me into the town, and down to the banks of the Trent, where seeing a boat slightly moored, we entered, and cast it off: there were no oars; and in a struggle for the boat-hook, it fell overboard, and we, floating with the tide into the middle of the river, were left to the mercy of the stream. It was on a Sunday; and though many people lined the shore, not one attempted to put off to assist us. We expected to come in concussion with the bridge; but drifting near

some barges, we got safely on board one of them, ran through an alley into the town, made our way to the coach which was just going off, and were pursued a short way by the owner of the boat, vainly bawling out for the price of his boat-hook. This was my first preservation from an evil sought by myself.

I remained three years (and, I hope, profitably) with my Parson Adams of a preceptor, who had, however, less of the *suaviter in modo*, and more of the *fortiter in re*, than his prototype of Fielding's creation; and after the then usual routine of Lilly, Corderius, Eutropius, Phædrus, Nepos, Grotius, Cæsar, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and just enough of Greek to confuse me; I was recalled to town to be made a city apprentice for the present, and a Lord Mayor in perspective. While in the North, I saw the plays of the "Revenge" and the "Busy-Body," the farces of "Miss in her Teens" and the "Padlock," acted at an inn in Barnard Castle: Sir George Airy and Alonzo were not indifferently acted by a blind man (the manager) of the name of Briscoe; Zanga, Marplot, and Captain Flash by a red-hot Irishman,—a Mr. Hood; Sir Jealous Traffic and Alvarez by a broad Scotchman,—Mr. Wilson, who, many years afterwards, was what is called property man under my management.

Cecil Pitt, Esq. of Dalston, (of whom more hereafter) the brother of my worthy grandmother Mrs. Pitt, had made a fortune exceeding thirty thousand pounds as an upholsterer, &c. in the city; and as he (like Lieutenant Bowling with young Rory Random) very naturally imagined it was quite as practicable for any one else to do as he had done, and that what he liked *must* be agreeable to me,—he proposed to my mother to make a man of me by apprenticing me to himself for the advantage of my being a member of the Fishmongers' Company; and then, as he had retired from business, he *turned me over* (as the apprentice-makers technically term it) to the present Sir William, then Mr. Rawlins; gave me half-a-crown to fête myself with on the day my indentures were executed; and then told me he had “made” my fortune;—which having done, I wish he (to use his own idiom to his customers) had “sent it home.”

I have so much to say about Sir William, who, during the four years I had the honour to be domiciliated with him, pronounced me “the stupidest hound on earth,”—and who, whenever I since had a successful farce spoken well of in the newspapers, has invariably exclaimed, “That’s a boy of my own, and I always said he was clever;”—that I shall beg leave to intro-

duce so important a personage in a new chapter; only stopping a moment here to observe, that in my youth I met with a volume of Old Trials, or English "Causes Célèbres," (for my early studies, like those of another great man, Doctor Johnson, were rather desultory;) and in this book I read the arraignment of a gay gallant for the abduction of one Mrs. PLEASANT Rawlins; and from the Christian name of the lady, adopted an opinion during my apprenticeship, (however I may have changed it since) that she could not by any chance have been an ancestress of my newly-acquired master.

CHAP. II.

1785—6—7—8—9.

 "The London 'Prentice."

School retrospections—Of Sir William Rawlins before he was Sir William—Of the great Johnny Wilkes before he died, and the greater John Palmer before he quitted the Royalty Theatre—Awful consequences of the construction of that theatre to Mr. Palmer and myself—Graceless tricks of a stage-struck apprentice—Advantages of two eyes over one—New translation of an old motto—Mr. Booth (not the great Booth)—Preparations for a change of professional pursuits.

I CONFESS myself quite ashamed of carrying the reader back again so far as the county of Durham, which I positively must do ; but I shall keep him there no longer than to observe that, while at school, I fitted up a little study as much like a theatre as cartridge paper and paste-board scenery could make it ; opened it to my school-fellows, by regular permission of the master, on certain half-holidays ; and wrote a little drama, in one act, with which the boys were delighted : the master treated it with contempt, and bade me pay more attention to my Terence ; and

my poor grandmother, who was a still severer critic, on my return to town, put it in the fire. I need not say how superior I considered the judgment of my school-fellows to that of the domine or my grandam; and I mention the circumstance here only as in some degree leading to what afterwards befel me when articulated to Sir William, who, instead of being delighted with the precocity of my dramatic partialities, (I must not say talents) prophesied that I should “never be worth a farthing while I had a head on;” and the late Alderman Swain, who lived next door, and had served his time to my before-named uncle, Squire Pitt,—used to exhort me to “carry my dish even,” and imitate that uncle, whose boast was, that, “thank Heaven! he had never paid to see a play in his life,” though he never objected to go in his carriage to the theatre with his sister’s free admissions, and eat a good supper, and drink wine, at her expense, afterwards. “*His* curtain,” said Cecil, “was drawn up in trade, a determination to get rich was his prompter, and industry his acting manager.”

A little clever pantomime trickery was, notwithstanding, occasionally allowed; when a purblind old lady brought a riband as the exact measure of a recess, to fill which she wanted a handsome cabinet, secretaire, or ward-

robe : if there did not happen to be one wide enough in the warehouses, a pair of scissors, adroitly applied to the unsuspecting lady's measure, increased the breadth of the piece of furniture to the exact dimensions wanted : bought, paid for, and sent home, the purchaser, imagining the mistake to be hers, blamed only her own stupidity, and, re-bespeaking an article of the necessary width, would have to pay a second profit on the exchange.

After my engagement at Covent Garden, having outgrown the recollection of my old companions, I purchased many articles of furniture at the very warehouses in which I had been an apprentice : my knowledge of the private shop-mark, denoting the prime cost, and attached to each article, enabled me to astonish the eloquent sellers, who pledged their "honour and credit" that every thing stood them in double what I bid ; till deliberately translating their own mysteries, I turned the laugh against them, and laid out my money to fair advantage.

But to resume.—It happened, unfortunately for me, that I had little taste for these and many other elegant deceptions, which combined to form the arcana of a most profitable trade ; and instead of reading over my indentures of an evening, to prevent my falling asleep by the

counting-house fire, as a little book, given me at the chamberlain's office in Guildhall, recommended, I passed the very few moments of leisure I was allowed, in constructing, painting, and decorating a very smart model of a theatre, to which I transferred, in miniature, fac-similes of all the most picturesque scenery of Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the Haymarket, to which houses I had always free access by family orders. This histrionic furor was beginning to subside, and my Liliputian theatre to be neglected, when a very great man, in my estimation, also took it into his head to construct a theatre so much nearer the vicinity of our shop, (odious word!) than those were to which I had been accustomed, that he very innocently revived the expiring embers of my play-going propensity, awakened inclinations which were to have an influence on my remaining life, and lose me all the common-council honours, aldermanic preferments, shrieval dignities, and the supreme civic powers of the sword and mace, which I am told, to this hour, would have indubitably crowned a proper perseverance in the art of making means accord with measures, when measures would not agree with means.

The great man I allude to, was—make room for him, kind reader!—JOHN PALMER, of Drury

Lane, who built and opened the far-famed Royalty Theatre : the first stone or brick, (I forget which,) I saw laid in the year 1786, and a few months since, when it was consumed by fire, beheld the last vestige of its remaining rubbish.

Mr. Palmer was deservedly a favourite with the public : to me he was the most enviable mortal I could figure to my perverted imagination : talk of civic honours ! what were they to me ? For a sight of plausible John, I would have overlooked the whole court of common-council ; to have touched him, elbowed an alderman ; to have spoken one word with him, I would have cut both the sheriffs ; or to have changed situations with him, I would have descended from the city state-coach, turned my back on temporary title, dinner, ball, with all the pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious mayoralty ;—nay, I actually made a still greater sacrifice ;—I neglected my own heretofore darling little theatre, to visit his : but mind ye, the spirit of my uncle was still so strong within me, that I spent no idle money, but always went with orders ; and so did Sir William, and many of his household too, with orders of my procuring. All the world, of course, is well aware of circumstances so infinitely important (so I thought them) as those which accompanied the building, management,

mismanagement, struggles with what was called patent tyranny, successes, troubles, &c. &c. &c. of the dear Royalty (and dear enough it was to poor Palmer). I entered ardently into the merits of the contest; called Harris, Sheridan, and Colman, in all companies, the tyrannical triumvirate; eulogised Charles Bannister, Lee Lewes, W. Palmer, Sedgwick, Mrs. Gibbs, Miss George, Delpini, W. Bates, Leoni, and Braham, as victims of unheard-of persecution; execrated Justice Staples, who either did, or threatened to, put them all under the parish padlocks, and actually sent Delpini to the watch-house for only saying "Roast Beef" in a monologue. I called little Quick a great shaberoon for ratting from his engagement. To my once-favourite actors of the Theatres Royal I could now allow no spark of merit: talent was only to be found at Palmer's, where "Don Juan," "The Deserter of Naples," and "A Peep into the Tower" formed my whole study: the scenery of the former piece I determined to imitate in my lately-neglected model, and worked at it so completely *con amore*, that one fatal day, in still more fatal hour, (I assure you, moral reader, it was the first so improperly dedicated,) when I ought to have been making out a bill of parcels, I was busily employed in constructing a lovely little hell, (nothing like

those at the west end, though I was apprenticed at Fishmongers'-hall,) but one meant to represent the last scene of *The Libertine Destroyed*—when Sir William unexpectedly entering on the scene, played the devil in a style I never anticipated. In his infernal wrath, he shivered theatre, scenes, and machinery to atoms; burnt seas, razed palaces, dispersed clouds, piled temples upon rocks, mingled cottages with the celestial abodes of Olympus, threw Vesuvius at Kamschatka, and consumed all upon the kitchen fire: then,—

Heavens! while I tell it, do I live?

He smote me on the cheek!

and that with so much marked determination, and such frequent repetition, that, unable to cope with the common-councilman's wand of office, (and a stout one it was) as Zanga again says,—

—— I did not stab him then,

For that were poor revenge:

but after upsetting a few piles of massy furniture in my retreat, (for I knew the knight in embryo would stop to pick every article up,) I left him master of the field; and having made up my mind to seek civic protection from what I then deemed civic ferocity, I reached Guildhall by forced marches, and poured my griefs into the bo-

som of the chamberlain; not the chamberlain from whom I have since so frequently obtained his lordship's licence for many a score of major, and minor, and melodramatic bantlings, but John Wilkes himself; who, after I had most pathetically enlarged on the cruelty of a governor (we scorned in our establishment to own a *master*) in not allowing his articed young gentlemen (apprentice was *infra dig.*) to waste said governor's time on their own amusements,—I showed my marks; portrayed the desolation and entire destruction of my property, the nature of which I minutely described; and indignantly concluded by demanding a summons for my oppressor to attend, and be made a terrible example.

“I grant you a summons with pleasure, young gentleman!” replied the chamberlain, whose eye appeared directed to another person, “and I'll tell you why: I have no doubt but your master will tell the story another way, and I am anxious to know whether I ought to fine him, or send you to Bridewell.”

I felt rather disheartened at the chance of the magistrate's verifying the concluding alternative; and still observing his eye apparently directed to a different person, I was about to express my apprehension that the worshipful Chamberlain seemed to have taken a cross view

of the subject ; when an officer of the court put the summons I had solicited into my hand, and bade me make haste home, and mind my master's business : now this was, of all other things on the face of the earth, what I felt least inclined to do ; for I had no reason to flatter myself that the step I had taken would give birth to any pleasanter feelings in the governor towards me than those with which I had left him : I therefore dispatched the summons by a trusty messenger, and went to my mother, asking permission to remain at home till the day of hearing at Guild hall, which she with the greatest propriety refused, and desired me to go back to business instantly ; nor did she at all appear so convinced as myself respecting the desperate ill-treatment of which I complained ; while I contended “ that the Chamberlain would punish Sir William, and give me my freedom, because I *knew* he *must* ; for in fact how could he do otherwise ? Finding these unanswerable arguments did not convince, I took my leave, and prevailed on a very respectable friend to give me an asylum till the eventful day ; and to make my expected triumph still more certain, (if any thing, as I opined, could increase its certainty) I did exactly the converse of what I ought to have done, and exactly what was most likely to produce my own defeat : I

had chuckled within myself, when Wilkes, on hearing my florid accusation of the city knight, laughingly lamented the destruction of a whole theatre, and professed himself an admirer of the drama; and imagining it would confirm him in my cause, I wrote him a letter of four full sides on foolscap, and left it myself at his house in Duke-street, Westminster, in which I appealed to his love of the arts, styled him the natural protector of all apprentices, and remonstrated on the bad taste of suffering a scion of genius like myself, instead of treading in the steps of my father, to be chained seven years to study the arts of buying and selling; the first of which might be learned in a month, and the latter consisted in showing a purchaser two articles, one better than the other, taking care to ask as much for the inferior as would produce a good profit on the best; by which means the purchaser is induced nineteen times out of twenty to swallow the bait, and bid the inferior price for the superior article, which, after some well-acted difficulty, is acceded to: buyer goes away delighted with his cleverness at making a bargain, and seller remains equally pleased with the success of his practical proficiency in the art of barter.

All this and much more I stated to Johnny

Wilkes, before whom the all-important cause came at length to issue. I was told to repeat my complaint in the presence of Sir William, whose stern eye would have abated much of my courage, but more unfortunately for himself than me, the governor had but one, and I was luckily placed (pardon the solecism) next the one he had *not*: his ears however lost not an iota of my accusation; and when I had finished, he made a long, and I fear a rather just reply, much more complimentary to the Chamberlain than to me, amounting in substance to a declaration of his having been unavoidably provoked by a boy who loved theatres better than business. The Chamberlain, with much moderation, and indeed good-humour, said that he also was a lover of the drama in proper time and place, and his respect for the talents of my father led him (the magistrate) to hope that I also possessed mind enough to perceive how much I was in the wrong; that my letter to him made matters rather worse by an improper endeavour on my part to prejudice him, who would not be prejudiced, in a question he was to decide impartially in that chair, or "why did he sit there at all?" (I could, if I dared, have answered from the Works of Mr. Joseph Miller, "For £1000 a year.") He proceeded to say that my

letter, while it depreciated, or endeavoured to depreciate, the profession, or trade, or calling, (for he was thus discriminately particular) which my friends had assigned me, convinced him I perfectly understood my business, which he advised me to attend to assiduously, and it would do more for my future welfare than all the theatres, large or small, in Christendom. He next admonished my principal not in future to degrade his dependents by *coups de baton*, which spoiled the spirit of London apprentices, whose legal guardian he was, and would be while he sat in that chair, or why did he sit there at all? He added, that young men might have worse propensities than a love for the theatre, or a taste for copying scenery; but that should it again happen that such partialities were indulged in hours of business, complaint should be made to him, (or why did he sit there?) and that neither bones nor theatrical models were again to be broken. In conclusion, he advised us to forget the present matter, and he was sure that I would be as ready henceforward to deserve, as the governor would be to dispense, reward instead of punishment. The Chamberlain's court re-echoed with whispered approbations of his eloquence and his justice: there was one circumstance, however, puzzled

strangers ; the court in general was too familiar with it to be surprised. While the worthy magistrate exhorted Sir William, he appeared to be looking full at *me* ; and while he admonished *me*, his eyes seemed fixed on Sir William, who, in his turn, having only an eye for the Chamberlain, who (theatrical people will understand me) being on his O. P. side, and myself P. S., I was not honoured with a single glance.

A most frigid coolness on the governor's part for some weeks, was the worst I had to encounter in return for the trouble I had given him, and, to be candid, I ought to have thought myself very happily quit. I was, however, to go to no more plays, and my friends were to give me no more orders ; and from a whimsical incident, which subsequently occurred, I am induced to believe that this was as great a privation to my economical principal as to myself: *exempli gratia*. After two months abstinence from my loved amusement, rendered more tantalizing by daily perusal of inviting play-bills, I found it impossible to withstand the attraction of a most exciting programme, placed by way of *affiche* opposite our very door, and enumerating a more than common list of novelties for Charles Bannister's benefit, at the

Royalty Theatre : having leave of absence after eight o'clock in the evening, I determined to avail myself of it, for the purpose of gratifying my inclination (*for that night only*) : in putting this resolution in practice, I thought it best to avoid either boxes or pit, lest I should be recognised ; and finding, much more to my mortification than that of the benefitee, the two-shilling gallery quite full, I ascended to the region of the gods, among whom I found a tolerably good seat, and one in which I presumed myself perfectly safe from invidious observation. Thus exalted, I began to enjoy myself, and was really happy for half an hour—when, O youth ! never imagine yourself secure because you sit on high, and never attempt furtively to obtain indulgences you have been forbidden, lest discovery overtake you as immediately as I thought it did me, when, on following Palmer's footstep with my eye, as he followed the Ghost of Don Guzman, to my indescribable horror and astonishment, I beheld Governor Sir William seat himself the very next person to me. Edwin, in Jemmy Jumps, never looked at Captain Valentine's empty glove with more rueful amazement ; nor when playing Darby, did he ever contemplate the unexpected scar upon the laureled brow of Patrick with an eye more *abattu* than mine, when it fell

on the terrific form of my now equal principal, who, by ascending thus high, had raised himself to a level with his horrified apprentice. Never did Garrick—but we won't disturb his ashes now. At first I thought I had been watched, and that Sir William had taken the trouble to climb four pair of stairs to be even with me for infringing,—not an actually-given, but a tacitly-understood promise, to forswear theatricals: however, I had two eyes to one, and soon perceived my error: the fact is, Sir William, who was and is a bachelor, tired of the sameness and expense of coffee-house evenings, although he enjoyed them in all the privileged variety of a Mason, a Sol, a John, a free-and-easy; and as I have heard, he was “a good fellow;” but that remains to be proved:—tired, I say, of knocking down order in taverns, and getting no orders for the theatre, (for as I was to have no more for myself, he could not expect me to ask them for him,) he made up his mind, allured by the same tempting bill of fare which had conquered my wavering virtue, to purchase pleasure at the small price of sixpence, by going at half-price to the one-shilling gallery, where he had actually sucked half an orange, sniggering at the minor dramatic jokes of that day, and apparently as happy as my-

self before I perceived his unwelcome apparition, which so ungraciously marred my mirth. The instant I comprehended the true state of the case, my plan of operation was formed, and put in practice. I had the uncommon good fortune to be posted (as I had been in Guild-hall) on the enemy's left flank, that is to say, his blind side ; and while the fascinating smile of Mrs. Gibbs (blessings on her for it !) riveted the right eye of the yet untitled patron of Palmer and his house, I dropped gently and imperceptibly, as it happened, under the seat on which the governor now stood up ; and fully determined to have my semi-shilling's worth, planted myself in the rear, still inclining to the left of the governor, who I knew would stay till the very last ; and occasionally manœuvring, deploying, and shifting my ground *pro re nata*, as the motions of my flugle man directed, I managed to see all but half the last scene, got home, and saved a servant some trouble, by myself letting in the governor, who took it very kind of me.

An early propensity to punning (that delightful accomplishment, so much abused by those who cannot pun, and so much more by those who can, had nearly proved fatal to my hopes of escaping Sir William's notice while I stood behind

him, *sub umbra*, in the Royalty gallery. The motto over the proscenium was—*Vincit qui Patitur*, in evident allusion to Palmer's difficulties respecting his house and the opposition, which he hoped to surmount, of the royal theatrical triumvirate. A man near me in the gallery read the motto aloud, and asked its meaning; his neighbour Englished the first two words, but could get no further; "*Vincit qui*," said the translator, "means *he conquers who*,—and *patitur* means,—that is,—he overcomes who—" "Gets a *patent*," said I; and instantly feeling the whole force of my imprudence in suffering the sound of my voice to endanger my incognito for the sake of a bad pun, I ducked as nimbly below the next seat as I had done in the first instance; and rising again in the back-ground, saw that oranges and Delpini's Scaramouch had rendered the attentive common-councilman deaf as well as blind to all but the scene before him. Some months rolled sluggishly on after this, during which my original sin or rather disease of histrionico-mania

Grew with my growth, and strengthen'd with my strength.

I always had an indifferent opinion of private theatricals, but I spoke several nights at a

debating club, in Capel-court, behind the Bank, with applause, and, *mirabile dictu!* with the approval of Sir William himself, who thought it might improve my stock of eloquence necessary to convince customers, and form me by degrees for the rostrum of a persuasive auctioneer. This was but oil to the flame that consumed me: I waited on Mr. Booth, then second prompter, and a respectable actor at Covent Garden, and a joint proprietor of the New Theatre Royal, Margate, and begged him to hear me read Macbeth: he judiciously hinted, that if I wished to evince whether I had any original ideas, I had better read something I had never heard acted. I chose the unobtrusive character of Marcus in Cato, with which he was so far pleased, that he advised me to get shaved, put my hair in manly training, and gave me a letter to Messrs. Robson and Mate, his acting brother proprietors at Margate, recommending them to give me a probationary introduction to the "liberal and enlightened," though ever-varying public of the Isle of Thanet.

No blame whatever attached to Mr. Booth, for thus, as I imagined, accomplishing my wishes; I told him, (and as I had reason to

think, told him truly,) that I was at liberty to follow the bent of my inconsiderately ardent wishes. In a recent "difference of opinion" with Sir William, during which he repeated his often-made prophecy that I should "never be good for anything," I ventured to suggest that in that case it would be to his advantage to relieve himself of so unprofitable a connexion: his reply was, "With all my heart." I then asked and received permission to write to my uncle, and under an impression that all was settled, immediately made the above arrangements with Mr. Booth. My uncle returned no answer; and when I reminded the governor of what I now deemed our mutual wish, he bade me hold my tongue, and the unprofitable servant seemed faster bound than ever.

Reader, whether thou art young, old, fastidious, indulgently liberal, or strictly moral,—just recollect, that if I now conceived myself trifled with, and formed a determination to do myself justice, as I deemed it,—I was but eighteen. From the age of eleven till fourteen, I had never seen home for even a day's holiday; and for the next four years, my very few leisure moments in the week, and the whole of every Sunday, were at my own disposal. My mother, my best adviser, was far from town; all my young companions

applauded and encouraged my project ; and if in throwing myself at once out of highly honourable prospects into the cabin of a Margate hoy, I plunged into a sea of long and troublesome vicissitude, (mingled however with many an hour of real happiness,) I have no right to complain of evils I was again so eager to bring upon myself.

CHAP. III.

1789.

" A voyage over seas had ne'er enter'd my head,
Had I known but on which side to butter my bread."

G. Colman the Younger.

Trip to Margate—Robson and Mate—Folly of adopting every one's opinion—Concise letter of introduction to a third manager—How I became acquainted with its contents—Set out a second time on my professional pilgrimage.

I HAD selected Margate for the scene of my dramatic *coup d'essai*, because I had a near relative there who had married a very pretty Margate girl, and, besides being respectably situated in the town, was connected with the musical department of the theatre: he was my half-brother, and named Cecil Pitt, after my great uncle the squire, from whom, on account of being so christened, my sanguine relation expected great things at the squire's death. I had not the least idea what sort of reception Cecil the second would afford me; but my ideas of

immediate fame and profit from my expected *début* were so magnificent, that I felt most independently careless of all else that might occur.

We had no elegant steam-boats at that period, yet the hoys were thought very commodious and genteel; and as they became daily more fashionable, began to be dignified by the style and title of packets: a few weeks prior to my resigning my civic prospects, I had accompanied my brother on board the Prince of Wales, Captain Laming, and was so pleased with the appearance of every thing on board, that I secretly resolved on choosing it as the vehicle of my intended emancipation. On the day I fixed for my departure, his Royal Highness the Prince was to sail at five in the morning: I sat up part of the preceding night,—a Saturday in July,—writing to my relatives, and stating what I imagined were unanswerable reasons for the step I was about to take: daylight surprised me at this task, (for a task it will ever be when we are deceiving ourselves under the idea of deceiving others;) and when I had finished, from having had also a very hard (and my last) day's work in the warehouse, I lay down so weary, that on my waking, I heard, to my infinite consternation, the church clock of Bishopsgate strike eight: this much

annoyed me, having planned my retreat for a Sunday; that, as I was allowed the whole day to myself, I should be four and twenty hours in advance before my absence would be discovered. No other packet would sail till the following morning; so after passing the day with those I was in the habit of visiting, (my mother, as I have said, being out of town) I went home early, and determined not to go to bed at all: my anxiety kept me waking, and at half-past four, with a small valise under my arm, I hastened, looking behind me all the way, to Billingsgate, stepped on board Captain Kidd's vessel, and went immediately below for the sake of concealment till we should have sailed, and fell fast asleep: there was a time-piece in the roof of the cabin, by which, at the end of my nap, I found it was near nine o'clock. As I felt no motion of the packet, I supposed we were yet at Billingsgate, and went on deck to inquire why the captain was so very far behind his time; when, to my delight, I found we were tranquilly gliding between the summer-clad shores of Essex and of Kent: the light breeze, contrasted with the closeness of the cabin I had left, was more delightfully fragrant and refreshing than I can describe: my elastic spirits became buoyant as the wave beneath me; and heedless of all but the present,

I felt the sweets of liberty physically and mentally in every sense : for more than an hour I sat in a pleasing delirium ; and whether I deserved to be so or not, I affirm that I was for that time happy,—perfectly happy : yet without reference to any other object than that of freedom, the beloved theatre and all its prospects were equally forgotten with the hated city, and every vexation it had to me been the scene of.

There was a very numerous, well-dressed, and apparently well-bred party, perhaps nearly 200, upon deck, whose lively looks and conversation seemed inspired by the fineness of the day, and the expected pleasures of Margate ; but I doubt whether any of their pleasurable sensations equalled mine for the short period I have mentioned : they had, for the most part, left comfortable homes, which they hoped soon to see again, and therefore thought less of their present trip ; or supposing their homes were not comfortable, the idea of a speedy return at the close of an evanescent holiday rendered present joy imperfect. I contemplated no return at all ; *carpe diem* was my motto ; and after being for a time insensible to every word I heard around me, my reverie was at once ended by the loud exclamation of—“ What a very extraordinary circumstance ! here are above ten score of sensible

people come out on purpose to be happy, which they can only be by rendering others so; and though above fifty of them can sing a good song, no one will lead the way; and we shall remain in chattering committees, or sit as mum-chance as this young gentleman (meaning me), all the way to Margate."

Roused by being particularised in this jocular appeal, my *amour-propre* took the alarm, and suggested that a sort of unexpected public *début* presented itself as a good omen not to be neglected: in short, I supposed it *was* to be, and, as poor Dicky Suett would have said, "in the innocence of my heart God help me!" I fearlessly replied:—"If you consider me, sir, of consequence enough to advance or impede the pleasure of the company, (which ever of those two effects such an effort may produce,) I will attempt a song with all my heart and soul, and rely on your indulgence for its reception."

There must be very many good folks yet in existence, who may remember the good-natured shout of approbation with which these few words were received; or if they do not, they will surely call to mind the effect produced by the song which immediately followed: my own vanity has no share in my relation, because the tribute I received was due to one of the happiest efforts of my father's double Muse. I had only four

days before heard him encored in "Poor Jack,"—the next night ditto. I ever had a rapid facility at "getting by heart," as Covent-Garden Theatre often witnessed; and having the words by rote, the music by ear, with, at that time, rather a good tenor voice,—it will not be difficult to believe that such a song, (not then published,) first volunteered at sea, in such a party, would have an effect quite equal to what it has generally produced in any theatre. Briefly, it was no sooner finished than encored, and then a young lady was deputed by her mamma to request it a third time; when the whole party, who had now learned the burthen, honoured the concluding line of each verse with a full chorus, in which a lad in the tops, who was in consequence christened "the cherub," heartily joined; and three convivial cheers crowned the whole, on the party's drinking the health of Mr. Dibdin, the author and composer of the song, without a soul on board entertaining the slightest suspicion that I was also a production of the same talented child of the Muses.

It is unnecessary to say, that during the remaining hours of our merry traject, I was frequently "called on," as it is styled.

Our voyage terminated about ten at night, when we were obliged to land on the rocks near the town, the present commodious pier not be-

ing in existence. I had given no notice to my brother and his wife of my intended visit, and rather astonished them by my sudden appearance at such an hour. I deferred explanation till the morning: we had much of family matters to talk over during supper, which passed merrily, and not the less so for the presence of a very pretty girl related to my brother's wife; and it was not till left to the solitude of my chamber, I had leisure to reflect on the extraordinary day I had passed, and the path I had chosen: this prevented sleep; added to which, I fancied I heard strange noises in the house, and a deep sigh at the key-hole of my door, which I opened, and thought I heard retiring footsteps; but as all was dark and quiet, I returned to my room, and after reciting, in an under tone, the part of *Lothario*, and some portions of other dramatic characters, I had grace enough left to ask the pardon and protection of Heaven, and slept soundly till called to breakfast.

Two or three years after this, when recapitulating the circumstances of the night I have just described, with my brother and sister, they told me, my unexpected arrival, and the very ardent and rapid manner in which I expressed my sanguine expectations of becoming the *Roscus* of Margate, induced the idea that I had quitted

town in a fit of insanity ; and, hearing me talk to myself, after retiring for the night, as they supposed, in a very desponding way ;—they imbibed the supposition that I was going, as the Quakers term it, to *put* myself away, or, in plainer English, to hang myself. In consequence, Cecil, adopting the key-hole system of *espionnage*, reported progress of all my actions to his better half, who stood in trembling anxiety at his elbow. How cautious should I have been, could I have imagined a lady so near ! When I opened the door on hearing them breathe, as above stated, it was *sauve qui peut*, and the curious couple had nearly fallen over each other down a flight of stairs in their retreat.

Early in the ensuing day, brother Cecil went with me to Mr. Robson, who occupied the dwelling-house attached to the theatre, and to him I delivered the letter of his partner, Mr. Booth. Mr. Robson did not keep me long in suspense : he said he was astonished that Mr. Booth should encourage every novice who applied, and make the Margate play-house a theatre of experiment : he added, that as they had no room for addition to their establishment, any attempt of so young an aspirant as myself would be fruitless trouble to all parties. Much abashed by the imperative tone this third part king of Thanet theatricals chose to assume, I modest-

ly ventured to hint he had another *Mate* beside Mr. Booth, to whom my letter was addressed as well as to Mr. Robson. "As you please, young gentleman," rejoined the triumvir; "you will find Mr. Mate on the stage, and, I believe, alone." Cecil became my pilot to a very comical, goodnatured-looking man, in a jacket and trousers, busily employed in painting a scene to be exhibited that evening in Mrs. Inchbald's new play of "Such Things Are." I presented him the already opened letter, which he graciously took with one hand, and a pretty ample pinch of snuff with the other; and having glanced his eye over the billet, he said,—“I'm sorry, my son!” (his usual address to all his younger actors) “very sorry, my son! that Booth did not write to me before he put you to the trouble of a journey: it so happens, we are full, very full, full to an overflow, behind the scenes; and I would to Heaven I could say we were ever so before the curtain!”—“What would you have me do, Sir?” I asked.—“The best you possibly can, my son!”—“And what is that, Sir?” “I never give advice, and don't, in future, mean to take it: look at that scene, my son! I began it yesterday at rehearsal—the actors crowded round—each advised me how to improve it—I bowed to every opinion, adopted every hint:

I had begun it as a grove ; and if you'll have the goodness to look at it now, you'll find it is a street." I believe I made an allusion to this anecdote in my preface to my opera of " Zuma ;" but it stands here in the order of its occurrence.

I was going away, mournfully crest-fallen at this complete tumble of all my aerial castles, when the manager said, " Don't feel disappointed, my son ! for this is probably the best thing that could, by any chance, have befallen you : here you would have run great risk as to success ; and even had you succeeded, could only have been retained as an amateur, or probationary member, of our corps ; but I have another company, entirely my own,—the Dover company, my son ! they want exactly a youth of your pretensions and calibre ; and as they are now at Folkstone, which is merely seven miles beyond Dover, you shall have a letter ; not such a letter as this, *advising*, but one *commanding* my deputy manager, Mr. Richland, to give you an immediate engagement, and put you on a footing with the first actor in the company." Here was " manna dropt in the way of starved people." I was profuse in my acknowledgments, and was desired to return in the afternoon for my credentials. In tip-top spirits, I accompanied my brother home. My not being engaged at Margate, where I should

have ranked as a second, third, or, perhaps, fourth-rate actor, appeared now in the light of an escape rather than a disappointment: *aut Cæsar aut nullus*, became my motto; and to be the Garrick of Folkstone appeared infinitely preferable to remaining the walking gentleman of Margate. Brother Cecil did not at all participate in my delight: he very properly disapproved of the ground of my expedition, and had accompanied me to the theatre, in the full assurance I should get no engagement at all; but finding the matter took a different turn, he began, in very persuasive language, to set before me the dangers, difficulties, impropriety, and, in short, every thing that could be urged in a right cause, of my proceeding in my hazardous and censurable undertaking: there was conviction in every word he uttered; but in proportion as he was in the right did I become determined to continue in the wrong: all he could advance was as useless as arguments applied to either boy or girl, when they first fancy themselves in love: I admitted all his positions, nor offered anything in defence of my own determination—but I announced it as a determination—that I had passed the Rubicon, and could not recede: if I had felt uncomfortable in business heretofore, how much more irksome would my situation be, on returning, to solicit forgiveness of my master,

to endure the scoffs of my fellows, the anger of my uncle, the transverse glances of the Chamberlain—in short, I conjured up every probable and improbable, possible and impossible horror; and with arguments as extravagant as fallacious, endeavoured to make good my ground, till I really persuaded myself, being “nothing loth,” that I was in the right. All this sophistry, however, had no more than its due weight with Cecil, who at length tried the experiment of representing the hazard I ran of being apprehended as a runaway apprentice, and even the risk he ran himself of being prosecuted, for affording me shelter. To the first I answered, that Sir William had so repeatedly assured me I was not worth one farthing to him, though he received a premium with me, that I was quite sure he would take no step against me, until I should, by my theatrical success, which I considered certain, be able to pay him the penalty of my indenture; and even then I would anticipate his wishes, and carry him the money. The reader may feel surprised; and treating this verbiage, very properly, as empty gasconade, may exclaim—

You talk this well;

but without the least inclination to defend the headstrong folly which prompted me, I

guess, as the Yankees have it, that said reader will be more surprised when in its proper chronological place he will find.

I *did* this well,

and voluntarily too; and by letters he will hereafter read from Sir William, as well as from circumstances relative to my uncle, it will be seen that I suffered nothing in the opinion of any of my family, nor ever became a burthen on any relative whatever.

Do not imagine I am advancing a syllable in attempt to justify my positive fault of quitting "that station" to which my natural protectors had destined me: I merely relate facts, and shall continue to speak as freely for and against myself as my own sense of conduct prompts: if any one should profit by the delineation of my errors, I shall have gone some way towards redeeming them; and if nobody chooses to be the better for what they read, why then nobody but such readers will be to blame. With respect to Cecil's alleged apprehension of being sued for giving me shelter,—I declare solemnly I do not believe he cared one farthing for consequences so to be incurred; but it was (or rather I chose artfully to adopt) as my line of argument, that such a fear was perhaps the cause of all his moral

severity ; and to quiet such terrific ideas, I, with much assumed magnanimity, volunteered a renunciation of all further hospitality ; and had the impudence to beg he would accompany me to the next tavern, and be my guest during my stay in Margate, which, I added, would be very brief indeed.

All this was ungenerous and unworthy of me ; but my object, *per fas aut nefas*, was obtained : Cecil was silenced ; the idea of being thought interested or pusillanimous, (where he really was acting with strict propriety and according to his conscience,) cooled the ardour of his zeal ; and after a little remonstrance on the injustice of my suspicions, it was arranged that I should remain his visitor a week, during which not a syllable more was to be heard against, or in favour of, my journey to Folkstone.

Mr. Mate was not at home when I waited on him in the afternoon ; but he had left me an admission to the theatre for the evening, where I consequently met and received from him the promised letter, with another to his wife at Dover, where Mate kept a tavern, and where he told me I should learn further particulars of the Dover company, for so it was designated whether at Folkstone or elsewhere : I occupied a whole box to myself for the evening at the New

Theatre-Royal Margate : the receipt of the house was about eight pounds, to good scenery, a pretty theatre, a decent band, and certainly some talent on the stage : the play was “ Such Things Are,” not long before produced at Covent Garden : a Mr. Haynes played the Sultan ; Mr. Richards, Twineall ; Tom Baker (well known by that familiar appellation) was Sir Luke Tremor ; Miss Chapman of Covent Garden sustained her original part of the female prisoner ; Mr. Robson, Lord Flint ; and the present Mrs. Edwin (then Miss Richards) personated Aurelia : the farce was the “ Poor Soldier ;” and though just from the metropolis, I found myself much entertained. If human nature were not human nature, it would be matter of astonishment why I did not happen to feel annoyed at the “ beggarly account of empty boxes” I this night witnessed, and, by a simple rule of three question, ask myself—“ If Margate actors, principally from London, play to eight pounds, what are folks at Folkstone likely to receive ?” but this sort of fair calculation not being on my side the question, did not trouble my evening’s amusement for an instant. At supper, after apologising for this only breach of our late treaty he would ever commit, Cecil renewed the subject of my *cacoethes ludendi*, merely to ask whether I had got Mate’s

letter, which, on putting into his hands, he, to my surprise and momentary indignation, broke open, and as instantaneously excused himself by saying,—“ This is no matter for ceremony: you are sent by a man, who knows nothing of you but from your own representation, to another man of whom you know as little: it is highly necessary you and your only friend here should be aware on what contingencies and terms your reception is to depend.”

I felt really grateful for this brotherly precaution, and must also own that I had no small share of curiosity to know in what light I appeared to Master Mate, as the keeper of the stage-door called him: I however, to save appearances, muttered a few words about “dishonourable act, and breach of confidence, in opening another gentleman’s letter;”—which meeting no reply, I listened to, and afterwards read as follows:—

“ Dear Richland.”

“ The young fellow who brings you this, says, (and I believe him) he will be a useful addition to your company, which you tell me wants recruiting: should he prove otherwise, you know what follows. I will, in a few days, send what you write for by another hand.

“ Yours, CHARLES MATE.”

“ If this epistle,”
Said brother Cecil,

“ have no effect in the way of dissuading you from a prosecution of your intention, I have no more to say.” I answered, I felt perfectly satisfied, and the conversation changed.

I saw “ Love in a Village,” and I believe the “ Busy-Body,” with “ Animal Magnetism,” and “ High Life Below Stairs,” at Margate, the company playing only three times a week. I paid the greatest attention to every style of acting, and discovered beauties and faults which I promised myself to imitate or avoid : hope and sanguine expectation were mingled with the pleasures of seven days, during which I was shown all the sights, and walks, and rides, and fishings incident to Margate,—a place I have never since seen, nor suppose I should know it in its improved state. My brother and I went out one day on the rocks collecting shells and shell-fish, when the tide imperceptibly rising between us and the cliffs, at an angle which prevented our being seen from any part of the town, we were for half an hour in imminent danger of a death which would have

met my follies in their mad career ;—

made me the innocent cause of involving my

companion in my own fate ; deprived the reader of a most delightful book ; and (I hope) lost my liberal publisher a few hundreds : but when hope was nearly extinct, a lucky lobster-boat came round the Point, the owners of which humanely made a bargain with us before they took us on board, where I was no sooner placed in safety, than I had nearly jumped into the sea, from the involuntary impulse of sudden terror at seeing and feeling a tremendous dirt-coloured crab crawling up my leg, which (unlike those of modern dandies) had only a silk stocking on it : these little matters served for laughter at the dinner-table, where we felt truly grateful to be seated in safety. As this was my second recorded escape from drowning, I beg no old proverbial inferences may be drawn from it. Two days afterwards, having sent the “Honourable Mr. Dowlass’s wardrobe” by the carrier, I determined to walk to Dover,—a distance only of one-and-twenty miles.

As I may want a description of a lovely summer’s morning for my next new melodrame, I will spare it here, and beg the reader’s company for three miles on the road from Margate to Sandwich : Cecil, his wife, and the young lady I have before mentioned, “brought me going,” as country folks say, for that distance.

“Farewell!” said Cecil with the rest; “and if ever you should be the first actor in Drury Lane or Covent Garden, do not forget your friends at Margate.” Cecil is no more; I did not become a first actor, but I became a manager; and as I have not spared the relation of my faults, I am entitled to say, that I had the pleasure of educating, providing for, and giving a business to Cecil’s eldest daughter, whose brother and two sisters have also been some hundreds the better for the way-faring adventurer, who reserves his *entrée* into Sandwich for the succeeding pages.

CHAP. IV.

1789.

“Which is the merchant here?”

Begin to be nervous—Sandwich—Dover—Mrs. Mate—Her hospitality, and bad news—Proceed on my journey to the Dover company, which had changed its destination—Hastings—Eastbourne—Manager Richland, and his corps dramatique—Sam Russell—Old Vinegar—Long Harper, Bob Jerrold, and Garrick’s shoes—Probationary airs—Poor Jack again—Am engaged—Want a name—Turn merchant, and figure for the first time in a real printed play-bill—Poor Jack again—Introduction to the ladies—Domiciliated in the cottage of a family of smugglers—Grand début at the theatre—Night adventure.

EVERY body knows the distance between Margate and Sandwich, which being no more than twelve miles, I soon accomplished, walking with rapidity proportioned to the agitations of my feelings, on leaving those behind me, whose good advice and kindness during the past week induced a feeling of desolation and undefined apprehension, arising from my present loneliness

This may appear childish ; but it is to be considered that I had been accustomed to the bustle of town ; that I left London in a vessel full of people in search of pleasure, who, for their own gratification, had called for many repetitions of my attempts to amuse them ; that at my brother's no pains had been spared to amuse me, and the charms of the theatre at night had been added to the hospitalities of the day ; consequently, when I had walked a few miles for the first time since leaving London, with no other company than my own reflections ; —the consciousness of being on a wrong pursuit, the selfish fear of not succeeding where my misplaced ambition pointed, and the present solitude of my pedestrian tour immediately succeeding the noisy variety of London and Margate, —so overcame me for a few minutes, that I sat down under a tree, and, in a complete fit of despondency, debated with myself whether returning to town, proceeding to Dover, or entering the sea-service, would be most advisable : this interval of blue devils lasted nearly as long as the first delirium of pleasure had done on board the Margate hoy. Extremes soon find their level ; and as much ashamed of this girlish “giving in,” as certain that *revocare gradum* was more than I had virtue enough to undertake,

I heroically struck my staff against the ground, and entered the Cinque-Port of Sandwich with an air of ease, which was far from being genuine.

An hour after I had dined, I resumed my walk towards Dover, where, on my arrival, I gave Mr. Mate's letter to his lady, by whom I was most graciously received, and a redundancy of attention paid me; so much so, that I erroneously fancied myself a free guest, and not a customer. The intelligence was cautiously softened down to me, that the Dover company had left Folkstone, and were exhibiting at Eastbourne, above seventy miles beyond what I had been taught to look as the termination of my journey. Next morning, I asked, as a mere matter of form, for my bill, positively supposing, from Mr. Mate's manner, (when desiring me to domiciliate at his hotel,) that I was to be received as a friendly visitor; when, to my infinite surprise, I was presented with an amount of items, formed very much after the model of that which was presented to Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams, in page, no matter what, of Fielding's exquisite novel. If I was surprised at receiving this document, the waiter looked equally so when I paid it, and, without taking leave of Mate's mate, walked out of the house. Previously to my quitting the town, I forwarded my

small matter of luggage to Eastbourne, addressed to the manager of the theatre there. It occupied two very pleasant days to walk through Folkstone, Dymchurch, Romney, Rye, and Winchelsea, to Hastings, where I slept on the Wednesday; and while viewing the ruins of Battle Abbey on the Thursday morning, was joined by a very intelligent Scotchman travelling the country with one of Jones's reflecting mirrors for taking profiles, portraits, &c.

This is another practical proof of the folly of young men who prefer their inclinations to their duties. I had never seen this man; I knew nothing of him; and in an hour's time we were sworn brothers. I ought to add, that I was by no means an eventual sufferer by the encounter; but the odds were very much against the result of any good from so sudden a connexion: be that as it may, like the heroines of Canning's *Antigallican Drama*, we swore an eternal friendship, which was never violated on either side, though it lasted nearly five weeks. It was about two in the afternoon of a sultry day, when I reached the Lamb Inn, at Eastbourne, after a walk of eighteen miles, thoroughly fatigued; and my companion, who was a fat man, with a heavy sort of havresack to carry, was still more fatigued than myself. On entering

the village, I felt no small anxiety lest the "Dover Company" should have again moved forwards, and my journey, consequently, be not at its close: but, to my great delight, I saw the last night's play-bill affixed to a post; and while I was loud in my mirth at something whimsical in its style of commencement, a farmer, who supposed me one of the *corps dramatique*, exclaimed as he passed, "Addrott'n, there you be, laughing at your own roguery!"

When we came to the inn, the first thing I saw was my little valise, which had arrived the day before, addressed to the care of the manager: I wished to have improved my dress a little before I waited on the great man, forgetting that it would be first necessary to receive my wardrobe from himself. The moment I claimed acquaintance with the parcel, and asked a waiter where the manager lived, a very shrewd-looking, and rather handsome lad of about fourteen replied, "Mr. Richland, sir, is in the house; and if you are the *new gentleman* he expects, will be very happy to see you." This youth was nephew of the manager, his name Jerrold, to which he subsequently added a Fitz, and afterwards became manager of the Theatre-Royal, York, in which circuit he some two years since died.

The idea of meeting the manager in my dusty dishabille was rather unpleasant; but before I could express myself to that effect, young Jerrold threw open a door, and I was instantaneously in the presence of Mr. Richland, manager; Mr. Russell, (the since far-famed "Jerry Sneak" of Drury-Lane Theatre, and now the merry manager of Brighton) deputy manager; Mr. Villars, a pompous, corpulent gentleman, about threescore, who took care, every five minutes, to let you know he was not only an actor, but an author; that he had written a comedy in five acts, and that his wife was the best actress in the company; besides which, he found fault with every thing and every body; and from the acidity of his features and remarks had obtained the *sobriquet* of "Old Vinegar." This portly satirist was well contrasted by a tall, gaunt, meagre-looking gentleman, who, from some nasal defect, snuffled out dramatic quotations with an irresistibly ludicrous effect, and also boasted of *his* better half, who if not the *best* actress, he affirmed to be the prettiest *woman* in the corps, either in or out of breeches: this gentleman, whose name was Harper, was blest with a form and face, the component parts of which were still more discordant than his voice. Mr. Parsons, a serious actor, who always laughed, sat

next to a melancholy comedian, father of the youth Jerrold, who had so suddenly “let me in” to this long-sought society; and whose greatest professional importance arose from the inspiring circumstance of his being possessed of “a real pair of the great Mr. Garrick’s own shoes,” in which the happy Jerrold played every part assigned to him, and consequently maintained a most respectable standing in the theatre. I still see the delight with which his eyes sparkled when he exhibited these relics of the mighty Roscius to me for the first time, and his stare of admiration, on learning that the “new gentleman” was really and truly no more nor less than a genuine godson of the immortal G.

I delivered Mr. Mate’s letter (the contents of which the reader is already acquainted with) to Mr. Richland, a remarkably handsome and good-humoured John Palmer looking sort of a gentleman, who gave me a very hearty welcome, and frankly said his company was so thin that my arrival could not fail of being an acquisition in some way or other: he then introduced me to the gentlemen collectively, and each gentleman individually to me, concluding the ceremony by asking me to favour him with a “taste of my quality,”—in other words, sing a song, and afterwards dine with him. I would much ra-

ther have dined first, and sung afterwards ; but a request from a manager being, in my estimation, nothing less than a command, I made a sort of theatrical apology about fatigue, taken by surprise, &c. &c. and hoped for “usual indulgence,” while I sang “Poor Jack :” the little cherub was again propitious ; and the song being quite new, all seemed pleased with it: Richland exclaimed, “capital !” Russell, “very good !” Old Vinegar said, there were odd lines in it, but yet it was exactly the song to suit his wife, who acted and sung vastly well when in a sailor’s dress : Harper snuffled out, that *his* wife looked well in any dress : Parsons cried “bravo !” and Jerrold swore by Garrick’s shoes, it was excellent. I then, by desire, sang “Bonny Bet,” and “Charming Village Maid,” from O’Keeffe’s last new farce of “The Farmer ;” and being next required to name what character I wished for a first appearance, to make a show of my versatility, I fixed upon “Young Norval,” though it was a part I had never studied ; but I kept that to myself ; borrowed a book, as I said, “just to refresh my memory ;” promised to be quite ready for the attempt on the following evening ; and when I obtained leave to retire, and got possession of my valise, it was on condition I returned in an hour, to dine with the

jolly set, and bring my travelling companion with me. Little Jerrold was printer to the corps; and as I was leaving the room, he asked under what name he should have the honour to insert my *début* in the play-bill; "Sir," replied I, "my name is Norval."—"True, Sir, upon the Grampian Hills; but your real name?" This rather puzzled me, as I had, now and then, a sort of timid qualm, upon the chance of Sir William's sending somebody to conduct me back to my friend Johnny Wilkes, from whom it was very probable I might not get so easy a dismissal as formerly. I, therefore, after some pause, told the proprietor of Garrick's shoes merely to announce a young gentleman, his first appearance, &c. &c.: he commended my modesty; and when I retired, on reflecting that I must have a name of some sort, and that my own, not being a very common one, might induce discovery, and cause pursuit, I chose the appellation of Merchant; a name I had formerly adopted at school, when I corresponded, as was the custom there, by letter, with boys of my own class, on literary, mercantile, or other subjects calculated to improve us; and on which occasion each of us chose a *nom de guerre*.

Poor Merchant! thy very first attempt at adventure was a disappointment: for when I

returned, spruced-up for dinner, accompanied by my fellow-traveller, who was delighted at the introduction, and at my brilliant prospects,—when, I say, I had just entered the room, and, to show my “fitness for the morrow’s strife,” addressed the manager with—

Never till now stood I in such a presence :

Yet, trust me, Norval ne’er shall shame thy favour,

But blood of Douglas shall protect itself;—

“Bravo!” he cried, “bravo! my friend, you’ll make a hit, I’m sure; but it won’t be in Douglas. I am really sorry you can’t come out in that part; for Mrs. Lushington, the great banker’s lady, has sent to desire it may be performed by Mr. Russell, to whom, indeed, the part belongs by right, but who kindly waved his privilege in your favour, when you spoke ‘your virtuous wishes.’” “Sir,” I replied, “I defer with pleasure to the lady’s commands, and the gentleman’s prior possession; but what *may* I come out in?”—“All settled, my boy! I have announced you in a way to make assurance double-sure, and you shall come out in POOR JACK! *Ecce iterum Crispinus!*” “Well then,” bowed I, “Poor Jack let it be; but, as Charles Incledon would have said, ‘singing is not acting,’ and I should really like—” “To be sure

you would," said the manager, "and so you shall: I have sent you to the play-bill as Captain Valentine in O'Keeffe's dear little farce of 'The Farmer:' you know the songs; your voice will just do; and if you never played the part, you'll have nothing to do, when you quit us this evening, but to sit up the rest of the night to study, and after a short nap in the morning you'll awake perfect as an angel." This was cool; but as I was acquainted with the music; and the part of Valentine, in point of study, compared to Norval, was, to use a simile I once heard from Mr. Coleridge, "an ounce vial compared to the cataract of Niagara,"—I unresistingly submitted, and the general good-humour was such, that I never, among a party of men only, passed a pleasanter day. A bed at the inn recruited me completely; and as soon as I had breakfasted in the morning, Russell, who had been particularly kind and attentive, and with whom I began a friendship which has never been interrupted,—called, and took me with him to the theatre, giving me much useful, interesting, and laughable information respecting all my future brethren of the sock and buskin, who componently formed the Dover company. I had got ready in the words of Captain Valentine, and rehearsed so as to give some hope that the "new

gentleman" would not entirely disgrace his "new" associates. Russell gave me many valuable hints, which I did not neglect. The lady who played "My bonny Bet" was Mrs. Waylett, an ancestral relative of the lady of similar name, who is now on the London boards. The part of Lady Randolph was also rehearsed by my rustic sweetheart: and I was likewise presented to the neat but formal Mrs. Villars, Mrs. Parsons, and the pretty Mrs. Harper. On leaving the theatre, Russell was kind enough to accompany me in search of a lodging, which I obtained in a picturesque cottage in Southbourne, nearly a mile from the theatre, and half-way between Eastbourne and what were called the sea-side houses: the Caledonian artist also procured a room in the same cottage; and having been presented with the freedom of our little theatre, in return, presented most of its members with "shades" of their respective features.

The eventful night arrived: "Poor Jack" was once more encored; and I sang it nearly every remaining night of the season, which lasted about three months: Captain Valentine also came in for his due share of approbation; and, after supping with Richland and Russell at the Lamb, I went home, with my Scotch friend, in great glee, to our new quarters.

The theatre was formed in a very large barn and adjoining stables, the property of a carrier, who fitted it up at some expense, and exacted a moderate rent for it, which, I am proud to say for the credit of the establishment, was punctually paid.

I remember, some weeks after, being very happy at earning five shillings from our landlord, by making a drawing of his waggon and horses.

The decorations of the theatre, which were Mate and Richland's property, consisted of about twenty pretty good drop-scenes, with the usual quantum of crowns, chains, and dresses; and it was our grand boast, that the wardrobe was very superior to that of the great Mr. Fox, at that time proprietor and manager of the "regular" Theatre-Royal, Brighton." The altitude of our proscenium was little more than ten feet; yet my friend Russell, at his benefit, advertised the exhibition of a giant thirty feet high, in the Ombres Chinoises, and the unsophisticated natives completely swallowed the bait.

On our way home from the Lamb, after the play, my northern companion criticised the theatre and the actors; and, kindly congratulating me on what he was pleased to term my complete success, gave me, as he deemed it, very excellent advice respecting the remuneration I

should next day demand, in the form of salary, benefits, &c.

“Your theatre,” said the bonny Scot, “is unco sma’, and far behind the elegance and propriety o’ our great hoose at Edinburgh; and tho’ ye were vara judeecious in acting Maister Home’s beautiful poem o’ Douglas, yer actors are ower indifferent or careless i’ their parts; and there is nae ane o’ them to compare wi’ Maister Digges, i’ the Scotch metropolis; and I saw, years back, the cockney callant that pretended to *ac* Glenalvon, was aye putting an H tul every vowel that began his words; and when he told Leddy Randolph he was a *haltered* man, I coudna help wushing the fallow hanged i’ doonright gude earnest.”

About the hour of three in the morning, I was awakened by my fellow-lodger, who with a face like that of a corpse, and every limb trembling with the most aguish symptoms of terror I ever witnessed, told me he came to bid me farewell, unless, like him, I would make up my mind to escape directly from imminent danger of being murdered.

Before I was so completely awake as entirely to comprehend the cause of his apprehensions, I certainly heard expressions and threats, uttered by hoarse and discordant voices in the

room beneath us, more than sufficient to appal the stoutest. The most alarming part of the conversation was a hope, expressed by the speaker, that the fellows above slept sound; for that if they were to awake, and find out what was going on, he would no more mind cracking their thick skulls, than he would the running of a cask of Nantz. I now discovered what was at that time, and may be now, an occurrence very common on the coast, viz. that the owners of our cottage were desperate and determined smugglers: and terrible as their expressions were, I rather imagine they were intended for our hearing, with a view to alarm only, and induce us to keep their secret for our own sakes, rather than with any real intention of violence. Be this as it may, the artist declared he would imitate the example of Sawney Macpherson, the Scotch pedlar in Roderick Random, and make his escape from the window: but, apprehensive that, should his flight be discovered, they would imagine he was gone to lay an information, and that they would therefore take their own measures with me to silence my evidence, I assured the North Briton, in a whisper, that if he did not instantly return to his room, and at least pretend sleep, I would immediately go down, and put the whole corps of contrabanditti on their

guard against him, as the only mode of saving both our lives. He was at length convinced; remained silent; and the next day asked the old lady, who was mistress of the cottage, whether it was any way possible, in that neighbourhood, to purchase a wee drappie o' gude moonlight brandy, at moderate price; when she instantly produced a half-anker, and gave him his measure with as much nonchalance as if she had been a regular dealer.

CHAP. V.

1789.

“Every thing by turns, and nothing long.”

Motto of a Versatile Dwarf.

Extraordinary partiality of my landlady's daughter, not to me, but a very different object—Financial arrangements of a Theatrical Joint Stock Company—I commence author, and, as Theodore Hook would say, “do a bit of artist”—Russell's magnificent benefit—Preparations for my own night—Young Jerrold and I take a night trip to Brighton, to visit my mother, and fetch Werter—Army of smugglers—Benefit, genteel, but not profitable—Fracas in the theatre—New engagement—Departure from Eastbourne, and reception from Mrs. Baker, governess-general and sole autocratix of the Kentish drama—Account of herself, family, and theatrical company.

THE good family where we lodged, consisted of a grandmother, a young couple not long married, and a brother of the husband. The young bride was remarkably pretty, and rendered still more interesting, from being already

As women wish to be who love their lords ;

of which she seemed not a little vain : her husband was dotingly fond of her ; and the old lady likewise endeavoured to prevent her every wish, which, I can assure the reader, was no easy task ; for the teeming dame, fully aware of her privileged situation, exhibited such varieties of inclinations, (all of which *must* be satisfied) that no small expense, as well as trouble, was frequently incurred, to procure the requisite gratification, and prevent the danger of future disfiguration to the expected heir of Southbourne cottage. An instance of eccentric taste I cannot omit stating, as one of those freaks of fancy which caprice can only account for :—after a day's sighing and melancholy, I saw her eagerly devouring a black substance, which I afterwards heard was carbonated wood : the fact is, that she had taken an insurmountable liking to the leg of a milking-stool, which having obtained possession of, she reduced to charcoal ; and not only indulged her appetite with it in that state, but quieted her apprehension that, in case of disappointment, the child might have been born with a wooden leg ;—a circumstance to which, even had it occurred, I should never have given credence, although I think I have read of such an occurrence in “Wanley's Wonders,” or some similar work, where the accident is very cleverly accounted for by supposing the child in

question to have been the son of a Chelsea pensioner.

My own particular longings at this time were principally for a leading part in every evening's play, a good salary every week, and a great benefit at the end of the season. In the first instance, I was freely indulged; our numbers being so limited, that two parts in one play was by no means an uncommon allotment: with respect to salary, I had said nothing, having been assured I should *share* the same advantages as the best performer in the company, with which promise I was satisfied till the close of the week, determined to abide by my Scotch friend's advice, and not make any exorbitant demand; but Richland soon explained what *sharing* meant.—No person had a stated salary; but a portion of all money taken at the doors went first to pay rent, servants, and tradesmen; and the remainder being divided into a certain number of aliquot parts, the manager took six of those portions for his trouble, and the use of his scenery and wardrobe; and every other member of the corps took one; the prompter had something additional: and if any actor had interest or address to procure the theatre a night's patronage from any family of rank, he claimed an additional share for what was a very important service. For some period there was what might

be deemed very profitable business ; and consequently, with the exception of trifling squabbles about choice of characters, general harmony prevailed. With respect to myself, being the only male performer who could turn a tune, no one disputed my title to what is termed first singing business ; and a good song, in a village, is thought more of by the audience than all the acting on the stage.

It was here I wrote the first of nearly two thousand ditties which I have since been guilty of. I had to play the part of Sir John Loverule : the music assigned to this hen-pecked baronet being very old-fashioned, and little calculated for the meridian of our merry rustic patrons, I wrote a hunting song, which a clever lad, of the name of Benfield, (our leader of three fiddles!) very prettily composed ; and it has been a heirloom to Sir John in most of the Sussex and Kent theatres ever since. I had also another inducement to turn scribbler : the stock of comic songs I had brought from town in my recollection were so frequently called for, that, fearing they might lose their attraction by too much use, and having no spare cash to import new lyrics from the metropolis,—I determined to “*make a few*,” which I did ; and, in the course of a week, wrote a little vehicle for their intro-

duction, under the title of "Something New," which was simply a string of old anecdotes, linked with one or two original stories; and, indifferent as the *mélange* may be supposed, its reception amply repaid the attempt.

Not content with these *coups d'essai* as an author, Russell, or *l'ami* Sammy, was guilty of causing my incipient efforts in the art of scene-painting. I knew how to draw; and, as the reader has already been told, had at school, and at Sir William's, made some miniature matters on paper; but to paint for a positive and proper playhouse, betokened a degree of temerity which would have been inexcusable, only I saw that a scene-painter might pick up an extra *share* or two, besides the produce of his acting; and, I assure you, the said shares were not so ample as to fill the pocket *singly*. Russell's benefit came early in the season; and among other entertainments, he announced Sheridan's farce of the "Critic," which wanted nothing but Tilbury Fort, and the Spanish Armada, to make its performance practicable. Mr. Fisher, father of Clara, the celebrated young Roscia, was then residing at Eastbourne in private life, was a great friend of Russell, and no small patron to the interests of the whole establishment. As Mr. Fisher had a taste for drawing,

Russell prevailed on him to furnish a Tilbury Fort; and, after much proper display of modest timidity, I yielded, at the pressing solicitation of the benefitee, to accept a contract for building and equipping, not only a Spanish Armada, but the redoubtable flotillas of Sir Francis Drake and Sir Martin Forbisher, fire-ships included. I own that as soon as I had promised this awful undertaking, I began

To pull in resolution,

and, in plain prose, to be very much afraid my armada would prove as unsuccessful as its Iberian prototype; when, fortunately, I recollected that if I could delineate any one thing better than another, that thing was smoke. This lucky idea might be said *ex fumo dare lucem*; and, on the strength of its inspiration, to work I went: I began with smoke: the ships were to be principally *en masse*; the Spanish fleet, in the form of a half-moon, and two or three closely-combined British squadrons opposed to it. Peeping through a dense cloud, enveloping the crescent-formed force of Spain, were seen a dozen or two emblazoned pennons, bearing the Castilian and Leonian insignia; while, on the other side, the lions of England and Scotland, and the harp of Erin, rose triumphantly superior to the mimic vapour which obscured all else,

except now and then a sail, full of shot-holes; fragments of masts, spars, and cordage; and here and there a gallant little English commander, (about forty times as tall as perspective would allow,) waving his sword in one hand, and bawling through a speaking-trumpet, big enough for a thirty-six pounder, in the other. I however eyed this, my first marine production, with no slight portion of parental pride; and, after obliterating any objectionable part of the picture by the aid of a little more of the "great guns' exhalation,"—it may truly be said, that as I began, so I ended—in smoke. Before I displayed this pride of my pencil at the theatre, I went to examine, with a critical eye, the Tilbury tactics of my coadjutor. I am sure friend Fisher, on recollecting the circumstance, will forgive my acting up to the dignity of a true historian, and speaking of his English stone walls with as much freedom as I have done of my own Spanish wooden ones. Mr. F., though a draughtsman of much skill upon paper, with the aid of Indian ink, and a box of Reeves' transparent colours,—had, like myself, never attempted to kill canvass with distemper; and miscalculating how much lighter or darker opaque colours in size will dry when put wet on the scene or picture,—his white stone fort, and some blushing outworks,

tinted by a rising sun, opposed to the surrounding waves of a sea which had dried to a grass green, had the appearance, at first view, of a large lime-kiln in a little brick-field ; which idea was completely corroborated, when my smoke was called in to assist the delusion. However the scene might appear on the stage, no critic could deny but it looked remarkably pretty in the play-bill ; and added to the before-mentioned announcement of a giant thirty feet high, attracted no less than a thirty-pound house,—no small matter, when time and place are taken into consideration.

I now began to think of my own benefit ; and like most very young actors, my attentions were more directed to what part I should figure in, than what piece would be most likely to fill my house. I had very lately seen Mr. Reynolds's tragedy of Werter enacted at Covent-Garden Theatre ; and having paid much attention to Mr. Holman's passionate representation of the love-stricken hero, I determined to break the hearts of every milliner and maiden in Eastbourne. But Werter was not printed, and we had no manuscript:—what then ? they were acting it at Brighton, only eighteen miles distant ; and as my mother happened to be there, I determined to visit her, obtain amnesty for my elopement,

and use her interest with good-natured Jem Wild, (prompter at Brighton and Covent Garden) to borrow or copy the tragedy. As I played every night, and had to rehearse every day, I had no other mode of accomplishing my wish than that of leaving Eastbourne on a Saturday night after the farce was over, staying Sunday at Brighton, and returning on Monday morning. Young Jerrold or Fitzgerald offered to accompany me: we left Eastbourne as the church clock struck midnight; but the moon was up, the breeze was beautiful, the road romantic, and we had cheered our spirits with a good supper at the Lamb. We marched merrily along till near Seaford; when the moon having retired, our direct road grew rather difficult to be distinguished, as it lay over a waste down, bordered with tremendous cliffs. As the sky became more obscure, a proportionably brilliant, but terrific effect, was produced by the sudden glare of innumerable signals of fire along the whole line of coast, proceeding from flash-boxes; and as we passed the end of a gloomy defile, cut in a chalk road in the direction of the sea, we were suddenly met by about two hundred horses, ridden or led by perhaps half that number of smugglers, all well armed, and each horse carrying as many casks of "moonlight" as could

be slung on his back. They challenged us with much civility; asked where we were going; and on being informed, said we must not proceed further in that direction, but accompany them for a few miles, when they would set us down in a place much nearer Brighton than we then were: this arrangement was imparted in a good-natured tone, but yet one of so much decision, that we had no alternative but to fall in with their humour. They insisted on our each just tasting a glass of god-send, as they chose to christen some excellent brandy; and the next moment the godson of Garrick, the Incledon of Eastbourne, and the pupil of Sir William, was seated between two tubs, on a tall black mare; and little Bob Jerrold, bestriding a cask of contraband, on the back of a Shetland pony. We rode silently along for a few minutes, when an athletic horseman, in a white round frock, came close to me with rather a meaning air, and asked whether I could not sing Poor Jack; and before I could answer, burst into a laugh, by which I discovered him to be the brother of my landlord at Eastbourne: he added, they had made a capital night's work, and should soon be "at home,"—meaning, as I afterwards learned, their general depôt in another part of the cliffs; but that if we had continued our road, and happened to

mention the sort of cavalcade we had encountered, there might be those upon the alert who would probably have pursued, and given them some trouble. In about an hour we were liberated, with a caution, that it would be "as well" to say nothing about the good company we had been in: it was now day-break; and by the directions they gave, we reached Brighton at an early hour, breakfasted at an inn, and as soon as I thought my mother would be visible, I sent young Jerrold to her with a letter. All anger subsided at the sudden pleasure of knowing I was so near; for though I had written, through a friend in town, to assure her of my safety, I had not said where an answer could meet me. I had, of course, much of well-merited reproof and remonstrance to listen to; but then I learned my mother had seen Sir William, who declared he should take no sort of trouble to molest me, till I was sufficiently well settled to be able to pay the penalty of my frolic.

After a long relation of what the reader already knows, Mr. Wild, the prompter, was sent to, came and dined with us, brought the manuscript of Werter, and by close work the whole day, and sitting up great part of the night, I made a complete copy of it: so that my holiday was rather a fatiguing one. We visited the

Brighton green-room next morning; saw Miss Fontenelle, from Covent Garden, rehearse Moggy M'Gilpin; and after an early dinner, the embryo York manager and myself set our faces towards Eastbourne, in hopes of being in time to begin the play: in this we were mistaken; we had twenty miles to walk, were overtaken by an autumnal shower, lost our way when it got dark, supped, sung, danced, and slept at a little inn where there was a harvest feast, and were well lectured at Eastbourne next day.

I had assured my mother, that unless I found good reason to be satisfied with my present pursuits, I would relinquish them at the close of the Eastbourne season. When my benefit arrived, after copying all the parts, getting up the play, and dedicating a whole week to it, my ambition was fully gratified by the way in which "Werter" was received. Russell played Albert, and Mrs. Waylett Charlotte; but if I had acted Robinson Crusoe instead, borrowed Russell's giant, Fisher's fort, and put my own armada once more upon the stocks, the event, in point of profit, would have been some hundreds per cent. better: as it was, I gained something; what that something was, is not worth recording; but certainly not of so much value as the experience it brought with it.

About this time my Scotch travelling companion, after he had taken all the profiles he could get customers to give him countenance for, lowered his terms ; but the season was declining ; and tired of making faces at half price, he bade us adieu the evening before my benefit, and we heard no more of a very boon and honest member of our little evening parties at the Lamb. Soon after, a tremendous affair, approaching in comic situation to Tom Jones's battle royal at the inn at Upton, caused a division of our Thespian force. One morning, at rehearsal, Harper, with the pretty wife, having, as it was presumed, procured her an engagement at Brighton, seemed to seek an opportunity to quarrel with the manager and company ; and used such very unwarrantable language to Russell, that blows were exchanged. Harper seized a sabre which hung in the dressing-room, and would have done mischief, but Richland took it from him : Mrs. Harper, in defence of her husband, attacked Russell in front, while he was also assailed by a very large dog of Harper's in the rear. Richland then brought his powerful aid ; Harper was in consequence, after a good thrashing, expelled, —the very thing he wanted ; and every one was so indignant that this hitherto tall monarch of the green-room should have so long, by dint of

physical appearance, held the reins,—that every one took an opportunity of reminding him of his former tyranny; and as he had once, without the slightest foundation, asserted that he thought his pretty wife paid rather too much attention to the song, probably meaning the singer, of “Poor Jack,”—I half intimated an intention of calling him out myself, which Richland said would be quite unnecessary, as Harper had just placed his better half in the Brighton coach, mounted the roof himself, and thus went out voluntarily, without being called.

An engagement, rather better than the contingency of sharing, and at what was then thought a respectable salary, was now offered me by Mr. Gardner, well known in Kent as the theatrical manager of Mrs. Baker, of the Canterbury, Rochester, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, Feversham, Deal, and other theatres: and, as Richland frankly told me he was not certain whether he should keep the company together after their next campaign at Dover, I left him, Russell, and Co. with much regret; and, I believe, the last-named gentleman and myself are now the sole survivors, in this life, of the far-famed Dover company. Mrs. Baker’s corps being on a salary establishment, and not a joint-

stock concern, ranked considerably above the Dover association, and appeared to me to present the next grade to a situation in a theatre royal, the grand aim of my ambition; and though I quitted my late friends with much reluctance, they had all acquiesced in the prudence of my plan. Prudence, for the first time! I certainly felt, from what little experience I had acquired, and the idea that my relations (though not actually approving my perseverance in theatricals) were beginning to bestow a sort of *sub rosa* sanction to it,—that there was less of folly in proceeding than had marked the commencement of my tour. Soon after my arrival at Eastbourne, brother Cecil wrote me a most furious nine-sided philippic on the folly of my “making sport for clowns,” when I ought to be paving my way to the magistracy of the great metropolis; for, puerile as it may be thought, the certainty of my becoming an alderman by continuing with Sir William, could never, by any argument (or sophistry, as Cecil termed it) of mine, be detached from his ideas. My brother Charles, of whom I have scarcely yet spoken, and who has already so well introduced himself to the public, as author of the “Farmer’s Wife,” “My Spouse and I,” with a hundred other dramas, burlettas, novels, essays,

and songs out of number, (and who also was intended to be a Lord Mayor,) stood perfectly neutral in point of opinion; or, if he had a bias, it was to my view of the question: but Cecil's letter, however well intended, was so violently outrageous, that not feeling able to answer "with the temper that became me," I trusted to time to set matters right, and passed on, like the French philosophers of that period, to the order of the day.

On the whole, I experienced, if not more pleasurable, at least more tranquil sensations, while retracing the line of coast I had passed three months before; and arrived in health and spirits at Deal, where my new commandress was, in her own words, "filling up the time, and keeping her people together, just from hand to mouth, as one might say, till her new 'great grand theatre' (a figure of description she was very partial to) at Canterbury should be quite finished."

This good lady, who read but little, and had learned no more of writing than to sign her name, had been left a widow without any resources but her own praise-worthy (and I am happy to add, profitable) stock of industry: she was at this time beginning to realise the very considerable property she since died possessed

of: she had many eccentricities; but from more than twenty years' acquaintance with her, I think I may add, she owned an excellent heart, with much of the appearance and manners of a gentlewoman: she could, "in a good cause, and with the law on her side," sometimes condescend to lingual expression more idiomatic of Peckham-fair technicals than the elegance to be expected from a directress of the British drama: but as I shall have very frequent occasion to mention her in relating the events of the next twenty years, (patience, kind reader! you have still more to endure,) I shall leave her own words and actions to report her truly.

On making my bow in her saloon of audience, two ladies arose, and made each a profound, and (as both were good dancers) not an inelegant courtesy: the principal figure was the lady of whom I have so long been speaking; the other was her sister, principal comic dancer, occasional actress, wardrobe-keeper, and professed cook. I am proud to say, that the frequent and hearty hospitality of the manageress enables me to speak to the professional excellence (in the latter capacity) of Miss Wakelin, so was the maid ycleped: for the exercise of her combined stock of talent she received from her sister board and lodging, a guinea and a half per

week, a benefit in every town, i. e. four or five in a year, and other emoluments by way of perquisite; from which that she realised some hundred pounds, I may aver with confidence, from the circumstance of my wife being left her executrix, when, some years back, this votary of Terpsichore, Congreve, and Hannah Glasse, quitted play-books, pot-hooks, tinsel, and the five positions, for “another and a better world.”

The daily and nightly employ of the superior sister was not less arduous than that of her virgin relative. The indefatigable priestess of Thalia and Melpomene went every morning to market, and kept the box-book, on which always lay a massy silver ink-stand, which, with a superb pair of silver trumpets, several cups, tankards, and candlesticks of the same pure metal, it was the lady's honest pride to say she had paid for with her own hard earnings: she next manufactured the daily play-bill, by the help of scissors, needle, thread, and a collection of old bills; cutting a play from one, an interlude from another, a farce from a third, and sewed them neatly together; and thus precluded the necessity of pen and ink, except where the name of a former actor was to make way for a successor, and then a blank was left for the first performer who happened to call in, and who

could write, to fill up. A sort of levee for those of her establishment who had business with her, while others were rehearsing on the stage, (for her dwelling was generally in the theatre,) filled up the remainder of the morning. Her family, consisting of a son, two daughters, (one of the young ladies being the Siddons and Jordan, and the other the Crouch and Billington of the company,) together with her sister, and Mr. Gardner the manager, and sometimes a favourite actress or actor, were added to the dinner party, which no sooner separated, than Mrs. B. prepared for the important five-hours' station of money-taker at box, pit, and gallery doors, which she very cleverly united in one careful focus, and saved by it as much money in her life-time as I lost at the Surrey Theatre in six or seven years. When the curtain dropped, she immediately retired to her bed-chamber, with the receipts of the evening in a large front pocket, leaving always a supper table substantially covered for the rest of the family. Twice a week, when the theatre was not open, a pleasant little tea and card-party, concluding at an early hour, filled up the time, which, on other evenings, was allotted to the business of the theatre. When Mrs. Baker (who had many years previously only employed actors and actresses of cherry-wood, holly, oak, or ebony,

and dressed and undressed both the ladies and gentlemen herself,) first engaged a living company, she not only used to beat the drum behind the scenes, in Richard, and other martial plays, but was occasionally her own prompter, or rather that of her actors. As has before been hinted, her practice in reading had not been very extensive; and one evening, when her manager, Mr. Gardner, was playing Gradus, in the farce of "Who's the Dupe," and imposing on old Doiley, by affecting to speak Greek, his memory unfortunately failed him, and he cast an anxious eye towards the prompteress for assistance; Mrs. B. having never met with so many syllables combined in one word, or so many such words in one page as the fictitious Greek afforded, was rather puzzled, and hesitated a moment; when Gardner's distress increasing by the delay, he rather angrily, in a loud whisper, exclaimed, "Give me the word, Madam." The lady replied, "It's a hard word, Jem."—"Then give me the next."—"That's harder."—"The next?"—"Harder still." Gardner became furious; and the manageress, no less so, threw the book on the stage, and left it, saying,— "There, now you have 'em all, you may take your choice."

Her eldest daughter, Miss Baker, was the Lady Macbeth, Euphrasia, Yarico, Priscilla Tomboy, and Spoiled Child of the corps: Miss S. Baker (since married to Mr. Dowton) was the Miss Alton, Leonora in the Padlock, Polly in the Beggar's Opera, &c. &c. Mr. Gardner, the stage manager, played all the heroes, Falstaff, and the violoncello, set accompaniments for the orchestra, taught the singers, and sometimes copied the parts: he was a gentlemanly man of some education, without the slightest objection to a second bottle at seasonable hours, or a third at any time; and sometimes,—but we will wind him up by saying that his conduct to those under his direction procured him the honourable appellation of “the Actors’ Friend.” I had the pleasure of procuring this gentleman an engagement, some years afterwards, at Covent Garden, and he played Old Dornton at the Haymarket; but he returned, and died with his worthy principal at Tunbridge Wells. Her prompter, from being very tall and corpulent, was distinguished as “Bonny Long:” the latter short monosyllable was really his name: he was remarkable for being never out of temper,—a miracle for a prompter—and for having ten fingers, and no thumbs. Mr. Ireland, the leader

of the band, and his son, were Mrs. Baker's relatives: the son, through patronage of the late Duke of Queensberry, has risen to some rank in the list of metropolitan musicians. Among the rest of the corps were a Mr. and Mrs. Marriott; a youth, named Smith, now manager of the Norwich theatre; with rather a numerous list of odd names,—as, a very rough actor named Rugg, a comic wag called Frisby, a Mr. and Mrs. Wild, *cum multis aliis*; out of which list, Mrs. Baker, her sister, her two daughters, her manager, and all her performers, (Smith, young Ireland, and myself excepted,) are now no more; including Mr. Campden, a worthy fellow, who was her scene-painter, and gave me some profitable lessons in that art and mystery. I was some years since requested to place an epitaph on the old lady's head-stone, which, "O reader! if that thou canst read," thou mayst peruse in the cathedral yard of Rochester, to the following effect:—

EPITAPH.

If industry have claim to moral worth;
If to be useful to our kind on earth,
Be good in Heaven's eye;—then she, whose frame
Decays beneath, with humble hope may aim
At happiness to come. Alone, untaught,
And self-assisted, (save by Heaven) she sought

To render each his own, and fairly save
 What might help *others* when *she* found a grave.
 By prudence taught life's troubled waves to stem,
 In death her memory shines—a rich, unpolish'd gem.

“ No farther seek her merits to disclose,
 Or draw her frailties from their dread abode :
 There they alike in trembling hope repose,—
 The bosom of her Father, and her God.”

EPITAPH.

It is not in the dust that we are laid,
 It is not in the earth that we are laid,
 The good in Heaven's eye, — those who, whose names
 Are known to all, with humble hope may rise
 At length to some, — those, — those,
 And well-remembered, (save by Heaven) the souls

CHAP. VI.

1789-90.

“ And one man in his time plays many parts.”

More of Mrs. Baker—A pleasant lodging and landlady—Landlord not so pleasant—Reasons why he was afterwards hanged—I am introduced to Governor Trott, a great personage at Deal—Improve in scene-painting, and play almost every thing—Deal the scene of Fawcett's histrionic *début* as well as of mine—Conclude the campaign—Five miles march to Sandwich—Theatrical amateurs—Short season—My friend Russell comes from Dover to play for my benefit: I return with him, and sing at his—Visit my old Eastbourne companions—Rejoin Mrs. Baker at Canterbury—Lee Lewes and Edwin play there as stars—Return to London—Set out on a new tour, and play at Beverley, Harrowgate, Liverpool, Manchester, and Chester—Old acquaintances renewed—George Cooke—Trip to Scotland, but not with a wife.

MRS. BAKER, on my first announcing my name in her presence, asked, without waiting a reply, whether I was not very young on the

stage, whether I had got a lodging, and whether, after my journey, I did not want some money; adding, with her usual rapidity of utterance, "I am sure you do, and I won't have my young men get in debt in the town: here is a week's salary in advance, all in silver: show the Deal people a little of this, and they will be sure to be civil to you in hopes of seeing the rest of it." Suiting the action to the word, she put a rouleau of silver into a hand which was modestly extended, as I meant, in token of dissent as to the immediate necessity of the advance.

"Pooh! nonsense!" she continued; "the silver is all good: I took it at the doors myself last night. Miss Wakelin shall inquire about a lodging for you, and you will find Jem Gardner at the theatre: we don't live there ourselves, because it is not mine; I only rent it: but at Rochester, and Maidstone, and Tunbridge Wells, and my new 'great grand theatre' at Canterbury, I have dwelling-houses of my own. I shall give you a holiday to-morrow night, because you look tired: you shan't play till Monday, and Jem Gardner shall teach you how, and tell you all about it." Jem Gardner was *not* at the theatre; and quite forgetting the volunteer promise I had received, that Miss Wakelin would use her in-

terest to procure me a lodging, I traversed the town in search of one without effect, not having Sam Russell to assist me, as at Eastbourne; and when rather fatigued, and a little *au désespoir* at the idea of lodging at an inn, which I ever disliked,—I went in at the garden-door of a pretty house, and inquiring for apartments, found I was once more at Mrs. Baker's, whose house had a double front. I was now asked to tea, and introduced to an interesting-looking consumptive gentleman named Campden, who had, at Miss Wakelin's request, procured me a lodging, and being Mrs. Baker's artist for scenery, (and no humble one for such an establishment,) I found a very great acquisition in his society: he was, like myself, averse from the pot-companion system, which in that day too much obtained among the heroes of the stage, encouraged by the "nothing-loath" dashers of each town. With Campden I therefore passed many a rational evening (on non-play nights) of reading, and sketching designs for scenes.

The apartments he engaged for me were in Middle-street, facing an opening toward the sea, through which, while lying in bed, I had a good view of the numerous Indiamen which entered, anchored in, and set sail from the Downs. My landlady was a very pretty and intelligent

young woman, with a still prettier infant, which she seemed as affectionately devoted to as to her husband,—a Jersey man, of the most ferocious and diabolical disposition I ever witnessed: his wife's father and sister lived in the house; and upon the slightest pretence, (for provocation he never received) he would beat the gray-headed man, both the sisters, and even the infant with savage cruelty; and when ordered off to sea towards evening, (for he was in the service of government, in some way connected with carrying out anchors and stores, in bad weather, from the Royal Yard to the king's ships in the Downs,) he would take, not the key of, but the street-door itself away with him: this I was not at first aware of; but was on one occasion obliged to interpose, and took him before his captain, who confined him. I should have left my apartments on this account, but the unfortunate family declared, that trifling as was the pittance they received through me, they would be nearly starved without it: I consequently, as our stay in Deal was to be very short, consented to remain where I was. My amiable landlord, Mr. Norman, afterwards received his desert, for he was hanged, under an alias, as one of the principals in the mutiny at the Nore. At the theatre I was introduced to no less a gentleman than "Go-

vernor Trott,"—a whimsical character, and amateur actor, well known to all who have been at Deal, particularly to naval officers. He was then a slim lad, now a second Lambert: he sang well, in the style of Dignum, whom he rather resembles. As proprietor of the bathing-rooms, he gathers and dispenses much comic anecdote, and all *les on dits* of Deal, where he furnishes no unfrequent themes of mirth from the good-natured oddities of his own eccentricity. When I first saw honest Sam, he played an executioner, and he was not the only one in the play. Besides my performing a new character in play or farce almost every night, I improved rapidly, under friend Campden, in the art of scene-painting, thankfully giving him my labour in return for his instructions. My principal attempts were in the scenery of "Richard Cœur-de-Lion," and the "Destruction of the Bastile;"—both which pieces were produced and acted with more propriety and expensive decoration than could have been expected in a small theatre—a theatre which boasts the honour of John Fawcett's incipient display of his mimic powers,—of which, since he became manager of Covent Garden, he has often spoken to me with much retrospective pleasure. After a very brief, though successful sojourn at Deal, we removed one fine afternoon

to Sandwich, only five miles distant, where there was a pretty sort of amateur theatre at the New Inn. Mrs. Baker had been solicited by Captain Stewart, Doctor Currie, and others of the Sandwich *dilettanti*, to pay their town a short visit, which, through their patronage, proved a good speculation. I continued to cultivate my pencil here, and finished a model of a theatre, with scenery, &c. which I sold to some advantage. Mr. Russell came over from Dover to give me his assistance on the night of my benefit, which I took jointly with Campden. Russell played Marplot, and Jemmy Jumps, by which *he* gained credit, and *I* cash. As this was the last night of the season, and a week's vacation preceded our commencement at Canterbury, I returned with Russell on a visit to Dover, sang everlasting Poor Jack, and Shakspear's Seven Ages, written by Collins, at Russell's benefit; and was most kindly received by all my late co-mates and co-matesses from Eastbourne.

I found a very pretty and commodious theatre at Canterbury, decorated, and its scenery (all new) painted by the late Mr. Andrews, a pupil of old Mr. Greenwood, and many years principal painter, and one of my partners at Sadler's Wells. My Canterbury lodgings were on Lady Wootton's Green, in an ancient and picturesque farm-

house, formerly part of St. Augustine's monastery, the gate of which (a most elegant and interesting specimen of ornamented Gothic architecture) has lately and barbarously been pulled down, to the great grief of every English antiquarian.

In addition to Mrs. Baker's regular troops, we had the assistance of Mr. Lee Lewes, and the never-to-be-forgotten Edwin. Mr. Phillips, the father of Mrs. Crouch, also appeared as a lecturer on our stage. When Passion week approached, I remembered my promise of visiting town, and conditionally concluded my engagement with Mrs. Baker. I had the pleasure of seeing my mother, and found all well. After remaining in London a fortnight, I engaged to play at the Harrowgate theatre, and made a transition from Mrs. Baker to Mr. Butler, whom I joined at Beverley, after a pleasant voyage from London to Hull in a very handsome vessel called the "Jupiter," in which were two ladies and several gentlemen passengers, who put "Poor Jack," and other ditties, in requisition, during a four-days' sail.

A stage-coach conveyed me from Hull to Beverley, where I found the company consisted of the manager; a Mr. Wright, said manager's wife's son; Mrs. Wright; and her sister, Miss Hilliar,

a young lady, of whose talents and accomplishments I am not permitted to speak ; because it so happened, that, (as will be related in its proper place) some three years afterwards, we met again at the altar of the collegiate church at Manchester, and entered into certain obligations, which I sincerely believe we neither of us have ever repented : for my part, I shall merely say with bluff King Harry,

“ If any man says he has a better wife,”—

cætera desunt.

There were also related to the manager a large family of Tayleures: the father played first violin, and Sir George Airy ; one of the sons played Dogberry as well as I think I ever saw it acted ; another son is now performing at the English Opera ; Mrs. Tayleure, Mrs. Fildew, a Mr. Saville, with Mr. and Mrs. Jones, and Mr. Martin, an Irish prompter with one eye, who, when under the influence of the rosy god, would put his quizzing-glass up to the eye he had not.

From Beverley I went to Harrowgate, where we were joined for a few nights by Mrs. Jordan, as also by Miss Wallis of Covent-Garden Theatre, who was patronised by, and domiciliated with Lord and Lady Loughborough. What I princi-

pally remember of Harrowgate, is the aristocratical dignity—of whom?—why, the landlords of the four principal inns,—towards actors I mean,—for to their customers they were humble enough: but the members of the theatre were kept at such a distance by this quartette of the salver and napkin, that it would appear they forgot how equally they were servants of the public with ourselves, and how much less of education and intellect is requisite to make a real, than an artificial Boniface.

Many years after this period, Mr. Munden asked me to second his application to Mr. Harris, to put a person in a menial situation in Covent-Garden Theatre. On inquiry, I found this candidate had been one of the most magnificent of these gentlemen innkeepers, to whom no actor (if he wished to make a benefit) dare to speak with his hat on. I should not mention this instance of humiliation, but that the person in question afterwards disgraced our recommendation, and was dismissed.

While Miss Wallis was with us, Miss Mellon, and her mother, Mrs. Entwistle, walked some miles from a little village called Otley, to see our play; and beds being very scarce at Harrowgate, Miss Mellon accepted half of one with the very young lady, who, after certain clerical ceremonies, was destined to be equally

liberal to me. Miss Mellon and Miss Hilliar, in imitation of myself and the Scotch profile-maker, vowed eternal amity: long after our all being in London together, a most friendly intercourse was maintained; but Miss Mellon, like too many of my friends, is now no more.

At both Beverley and Harrowgate, I boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Jones just named; and, what was of great use to me professionally, learned the violin of the former, who lives yet to play in the band of the Adelphi Theatre. Mrs. Jones, who then played fashionable young ladies, was afterwards a great favourite many years, as the Mrs. Davenport of the Norwich Theatre, which she quitted for the Haymarket about three years back, returned to Norwich, and died. She will however frequently make her appearance in this narrative, not as a *revenante*, but prior to the period of her final departure.

My ardent desire for a Theatre-Royal engagement was now gratified by an offer from Messrs. Ward and Banks at Liverpool, where I arrived at the period of a grand musical festival, in the year 1791. Mrs. Billington sang at the theatre, as well as the concerts and oratorios; and the managers, who had engaged the theatre only during the festival, had reason to be well pleased with their adventure, although, on one particular night, there were so few

people in the theatre, that their money was returned, and the house dismissed. I had heard of, but never witnessed a similar circumstance in inferior theatres; and did not imagine it could have happened in such a town as Liverpool. We soon after opened a new Manchester theatre, the old one having been destroyed by fire: this was the second new theatre I played in at its opening. Mr. W. Bates, of Covent Garden, and who had been one of my Royalty favourites, was to have played Mungo in the Padlock on the first night, but did not arrive; and at a few hours' notice, I was persuaded to attempt that most favourite of all my father's favourite characters, and had the good fortune to be very well received. Our company consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Banks, Mr. Ward, Mr. and Mrs. Swendal, Messrs. Bates, Barrett (of the Haymarket), Tyrrell, Mrs. Taylor, (formerly Mrs. Robinson of Covent Garden, and afterwards Mrs. Wrench,) Miss Valois, little Miss Webb, daughter of the *great* Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Marshall, Mr. and Mrs. Keene, and a long list, the majority of whom are no more. I procured my friends Jones, of Butler's company, each a good engagement here,—the lady on the *stage*, the husband in the orchestra. In the course of the season some occasional new scenery was wanted: the regular

stock scenery of the house had been painted by Luppino, Pugh, Stanton, and other first-rate theatrical artists. As we had no painter attached to the establishment, I offered my services, painted the scenery of the "Tempest," "Richard Cœur-de-Lion" for the second time, and for three years following was employed whenever the painting-room required a tenant. My managers were so far satisfied with my exertions, that, at the close of the Manchester season, they kindly wrote to Mr. F. Aikin in my behalf, and I was immediately engaged for the ensuing summer at Liverpool, stipulating, at the close of it, to rejoin Messrs. Banks and Ward at the Theatre-Royal Chester. I mentioned, in the outset of these important records, that Mr. Aikin had answered for me at the font: I ventured, on my first interview, to hint at such a circumstance, observing I had the honour to be spiritually related to him: his answer, in the mellow and gentlemanly half-Irish accent which distinguished him, was, "Shiver me, sir, I remember the ceremony, but, upon my honour, I did not recollect *you*:" which was by no means astonishing, considering we had never met since the said ceremony had taken place.

My wishes to move in a sphere of the profession where I might obtain improvement, as

another step towards the honours of the metropolis, were now in no small degree fulfilled; my present brethren and sisters of the Thespian band forming a phalanx of talent seldom met with, at that period, in any *one* house out of London — Messrs. Aikin, Quick, Holman, Lord Ogleby King, Munden, Dignum, Betterton (father of Mrs. Glover), Hollingsworth, Banks, Whitfield, &c. Mrs. Mattocks, Mrs. Powell, Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Mountain, Mrs. Wells, and Miss Hagley, afterwards well married there. There being no stage manager but the prompter, and he (the late Mr. W. Powell, prompter of Drury Lane) being also treasurer, I accepted, at a small advance of salary, the situation of assistant to Mr. Powell; and, from his increasing business in the treasury, I very soon executed, not only the entire office of prompter, but had the whole of the stage arrangements to put into execution after they had been planned by Messrs. Aikin and Powell. I now began to fancy myself a man of some consequence, and set down this as the first of a thirty-five years' apprenticeship to the not very easy art of dramatic government. When Mrs. Ward of Drury Lane, and wife of my Manchester manager, (who has remained, even unto this day, proprietor of that theatre,) took her benefit, I wrote her a *petite pièce* on the subject of

“Botany Bay,” at that time a new and interesting colony; selected music, and painted some scenery for it from designs in Cook’s Voyages: the bagatelle was applauded, and repeated; and Mrs. W. expressed her satisfaction by a very lady-like golden acknowledgment. I afterwards sold the manuscript, music, and sketches of the scenes, to an agent of Mr. Wignell, proprietor of the Philadelphia theatre, for—not much; a portion of which I sent where I most owed it,—to my mother, whose ill health began to prevent her regular attendance on her theatrical duties at Covent Garden.

During the season I experienced so much kind hospitality from my friend Mr. Powell and his liberal-minded wife (now Mrs. Renaud, of the Theatre-Royal Edinburgh), that breakfast was for weeks the only repast I took at my own residence. At length, three very happy months elapsed; and after accepting an invitation from the Powells to rub off the country rust, and by a visit to them in the great city, at my earliest leisure, endeavour to catch the living manners of London management,—I crossed the Mersey in a crazy boat, (where when it blew a gale, and a female passenger cried “Mercy on us!” Lee Lewes exclaimed, “I hope not”) and received a hearty welcome at Chester, not only from Messrs. Banks, Ward, and Co. but (only think,

gentle reader !) from Brother Cecil of Margate memory, his pretty and good wife, and his five children.

If any thing I have recorded be worth a second thought, some easily-pleased and well-disposed peruser may remember *how* I received a most unanswerable tirade at Eastbourne from Cecil against my naughty predilection for the stage (prosperity to it! for I love it yet), and *how*, not being in a quarrelsome mood, I submitted, *sub silentio*, to all its angry argument: nay, I forgot at the time to mention that the said letter, being very voluminous, was written on the very paper which was afterwards used to light the individual stick of timber which was converted into carbon for the gratification of my Eastbourne fair landlady. "*Requiescat in pace!*" said I, as I laid it gently on the fire; and the whole affair rested so, till at Liverpool I received a rather different epistle, frankly congratulating me on "creeping on" in my chosen road, &c. and detailing many reasons why an engagement in the orchestra for Cecil, and on the stage for his wife, at Manchester and Chester, would be a most desirable circumstance. This was exactly what I had the year before accomplished for my friends Jones, who had now commenced managers on their own account in Scotland, jointly with a Mr. Hamilton.

I had domiciliated, on a partnership account of housekeeping, with the Jones's, during the last season at Manchester, and was lamenting in my own mind the miserable prospect of being alone next season, (for, reader ! I was ever of social, but domestic habits ; and had lately been so spoiled by the Powells, as well as the Jones's, that I felt quite forlorn) when Cecil's letter arrived, and I immediately found my inclination as well as friendship much interested in trying to accomplish his wish.

I had great influence with my managers ; and from a studious desire to be master of all the details of a theatre, I had made myself so generally, not officiously, useful to them, that on every contingency, it was, " Send for Merchant ; consult Merchant : " and at this moment, by lucky coincidence, while Cecil wanted to be in their orchestra, they wrote to me to try if I could engage them a leader of the band,—a Mr. Jackson having unexpectedly left them. I do not think my *protégé* was exactly the man to lead a Manchester band, but I gave my employers a very honest description of him : he had served a regularly-indentured apprenticeship to Mr. Charles Clagget, formerly well known as a principal musician in Covent Garden orchestra ; and after a letter or two had passed, I had permission to salute Cecil as head of the band, and his wife as

a respectable second-rate singer of the Theatre-Royal Manchester. His answer expressed great diffidence of his capability for the conductorship, and began with,—

“ If I shall e’er acquire a *leader’s* name,
My speech will be less timid.”

However, leader he was, at Chester and Manchester; and it being, luckily for him, the grand musical festival, on his arrival at the former place,—he gained an extra ten guineas the first week of his engagement, by performing in the Cathedral as well as in the play-house: and, do not be shocked, my friends! if I tell you,—what many of you perhaps already know,—that the play-house itself had been of yore an abbey—St. Werburgh’s, I believe; and some of our erudite and researching antiquarians of Britton, Brayley, and Capon *calibre* have discovered that the stage was the choir, the green-room a refectory, the audience part of the house (as it often has been since) a dormitory, the dressing-rooms part of the canonical vestry, and that the prompter’s recess, as well as the property closet, still retain the form of confessional boxes.

“ Well,” exclaimed Cecil, when we met, “ when I said to you, on the Sandwich road, ‘ Don’t forget me when you are a leading man in a London theatre,’ little did I think”—“ And lit-

tle do *I* think," interrupted I, "that such a thing will ever happen: it is enough, for the present, that *you* are a *leading* man in the Chester theatre." Cecil was attentive, assiduous, and pleased his masters.

Our season began with splendour: Mr. Munden joined us for a month; Mr. Kelly, and Mrs. Crouch, who were engaged at the oratorios, enriched the theatre with their attraction: then we had Mrs. Whitlock, sister of Mrs. Siddons. Mr. Austin, so often mentioned by Tate Wilkinson, and one of the proprietors of the Chester theatre, also added to the talent which I named in my former list of the Manchester effective corps. Our prompter was Mr. Griffith, —a name endeared to me by his having been box and book-keeper, and prompter to Mr. Palmer at the Royalty theatre; and by an odd coincidence, our Chester box and book-keeper's name was Griffith;—to distinguish whom from the former, and because he was a *doe*-skin breeches-maker, he always bore the appellation of *Stag* Griffith.

On leaving Chester, and recommencing at Manchester a few weeks afterwards, we opened with the "*Tempest*," and a *Tempest* it truly proved; for the critics of the town, not satisfied with the *corps de théâtre*, called on Mr. Banks, the moment he appeared in the character of Ca-

liban, to inform them why he had not provided a better company. I never beheld a more gentle monster,—a more compliant Caliban : he quickly allayed the storm by acquainting his interrogators, that Mr. Grist, Mrs. Simpson from Bath, Mr. Bowden from Covent Garden, and Mr. GEORGE COOKE from Newcastle, would in a few days be added to the establishment ; and “ Bravo, Banks ! ” “ Ward for ever ! ” and “ Turn out them geese ! ” soon resounded from all parts of the house.

And Mr. Grist, and pretty Mrs. Simpson, and Mr. Wright Bowden, (the Robin Hood of Covent Garden) and George Cooke, *did* come : with the latter I had the pleasure of being on particular terms of friendly intercourse to the end of his life : and a Miss Daniels also came, a good singer and a good girl ; who afterwards married the eccentric George Cooke, obtained a separation from him in the Consistorial Court, and is now the respected Mrs. Windsor, of Bath.

I was now not only the established painter of the house, but produced a farce called “ Sunshine after Rain : ” the Manchester papers lauded it most kindly ; the audience laughed *with* it, I hope ; and it was afterwards acted for Mr. Munden’s benefit at Covent Garden. Cooke was perhaps a greater favourite in Manchester than in any other town in England : his powers of acting were at this

time in their zenith ; his love of conviviality still superior to his powers of acting. Many an hour have I passed with him in his penitential days ; when, in the moment of sickness, induced by intemperance, he has sworn amendment : he lodged next door to me ; and on all differences between him and the managers, as agent and counsel for both parties, I have often experienced the sincere pleasure of reconciling quarrels where reconciliation had seemed almost hopeless.

The first cause of offence George gave, was one night, when he had Lord Townly to play. He had not arrived at the theatre at eight o'clock ; we had entreated the indulgence of the audience ; sent little Barret (so well remembered as the fifer in the " Battle of Hexham," at the Haymarket) to sing comic songs : the public were patient and lenient in the extreme : but when Cooke did appear, rather (as sailors say) a few sheets in the wind, he was received with three deafening rounds of applause ; and began his part by saying, with an accompanying hiccup,—

Why did I marry, especially a woman ?

and then he stopped, and staggered, and laughed, —and that with an air of so much drunken independence, that John Bull could hold no longer, indignation came down in torrents, and George was quite as indignant ; which was not half so extraordinary, as that the audience were

rather subdued by it. "Go on, George!" "Never mind them, lad!" and "Bravo, Cooke!" were heard on all sides; so that the whole of his first scene was inaudible, and he was suffered to make a parenthesis of all but the last, which he played with every appearance of sobriety; went home out of humour, and left word at the door that he never would set foot on that stage again. "Where's Merchant?" was the manager's inquiry; and in half an hour I was at Cooke's bed-side, for he had wisely, for once, retreated to his chamber; and in case mere argument might fail of effect, I was armed with an unpaid note of hand for forty-five pounds; but this I determined not to present even as a *dernière ressource*; I knew the feelings of my man too well: I had the good fortune to heal the breach (as far as regarded the managers) without it; and, on Cooke's merely commencing an attempt at an apology two nights afterwards, the audience reinstated him in favour as firmly as he had ever been. As this may truly serve for an *ex uno disce omnes*, respecting the freaks of the ensuing two seasons, on the part of this excellent, but most misguided actor, I shall say little more of him till his subsequent engagement at Covent Garden, when he cordially acknowledged all my former little anxieties in his behalf.

Mr. and Mrs. Powell now wrote to remind

me of my promise to visit them in town, but I was too much immersed in all sorts of business at the theatre to get an easy permission. Finally, I went to London for about ten days, in which time I saw my mother much improved in health; was kindly received by all my relatives, especially old Mrs. Pitt, my already-mentioned grandmother; saw Reynolds's comedy of "Notoriety;" "Oscar and Malvina," just then produced; and all the splendour of "Cymon" performed in the King's Theatre by the Drury-Lane company. An unsuccessful attempt, without the knowledge of Mr. Harris, was made by the rival theatre to burlesque Cymon; and as the genuine letter of so experienced and theatrically classical an artist as "my granny was," may interest some admirer of the old school,—"I hope I don't intrude," if I insert part of her own account of it.

After some few articles of family intelligence, the old lady proceeds:—

"I rejoice to find you are so happily situated, and hope you will (as you have seen the rough as well as the smoother paths of the world,) 'hold fast that which is good.' Believe me, you have been fortunate in falling into good hands. Make my compliments to Mrs. Banks, whom I knew as Mrs. Kniveton;

and to Miss Valois. Mrs. Hippesley, wife of old Hippesley, (who was father of Mrs. Green, the original Duenna) I saw laid in the earth a few days ago, at the age of ninety. This morning, at two o'clock, the Pantheon, in Oxford-street, was burnt down,—report says, through carelessness of the carpenters, who were preparing for the opera intended for this evening: the owners, I believe, are insured; but God help them whose income ceases till a building for the purpose can be substituted!

“Our theatre” (meaning Covent Garden) “is to undergo an alteration and enlargement next summer, to the tune of much money; so that the price of admission will have pretence to be raised, and will be so: the charge for benefits will also be increased. A gentleman named Smith was trod to death in attempting to enter the Opera House, where the Duchess of York and royal family went to see “Cymon:” the grand procession is very fine indeed, but not more so than in Mr. Garrick’s time: as to the performance, I’ve seen it in better hands: it brings repeated good houses. A shocking attempt to ridicule it was introduced, in part, in our ‘Blue Beard’ pantomime: it was a *wild** con-

* In allusion, I presume, to Jem Wild, the prompter.

trivance : Mr. Harris was out of town, and Mr. Lewis, I'm sure, had no hand in it, or I think was determined to give the projectors ' rope enough : ' the newspapers disclaimed all mention of it, as it was withdrawn. To give you a specimen, Jeffery Dunstan was to have walked as Cupid (this must have been some hit at me in the "Jubilee"); but as the disapprobation grew high, he was prevented going on. I would write more, but I am, ' at this present writing, ' little better than

A piece of ice, good Curtis ;—

yet warm enough towards you, to be your affectionate grandmother,

“ A. PITT.”

On my benefit night, (which I shared with Brother Cecil) I produced from memory the serious pantomime of “ Oscar and Malvina,” for which I painted the scenery ; Cecil and I selecting the music from the most effective old Scotch airs : I was also at the expense of Scotch dresses, which afterwards stood me in good stead at Inverness, where my friends Jones were managers, and who, about this time, sent me a most pressing invitation to pass the summer with them on my own terms, and liberally offered to pay

the expenses of my journey to and from the North. This offer was rendered many ways very alluring: in the first place, they wished me to paint all the scenery wanted for a new, but slight theatre, they were erecting at Inverness; and as, at this period, I placed my great hopes on painting,—the practice was a very important point, and the profit by no means contemptible: on the other hand, I was actually engaged at Liverpool, and wrote to Mr. Powell, asking whether I could be spared, and leaving all to his decision: he saw Mr. Aikin, who sent me a very kind message, desiring me to act as I thought most for my own advantage; adding, he should be always happy to see me in his theatre. As a proof of his sincerity, he afterwards applied to me to take the management of it as a winter experiment, to open it for burlettas, &c.;—but I was then under engagements which would not permit it.

CHAP. VII.

1791—2.

“What does he do in the North,
When he should serve Sir William in the South?”

Journey to Edinburgh—Lee Lewes—Jolly landlord at the Bull—Holyrood-house, &c.—Earl of Dundonald—Lord Cochrane—Villa of Digges—Scotch tavern bill and hospitality—Voyage to Aberdeen—Agreeable incidents—Put on shore half-way—Kindness of another “host of Scotch pints”—Re-embark—Arrival at Aberdeen—Depart *à la péripatétique*—Pleasant walk—Old Meldrum—Chapel of Segate—Arrival at the bonnie town of Bamff—Search for the theatre—Symptoms of *wiggery* at the town barber’s—Hear news of myself.

EVENTUALLY, my wishes to see my friends Jones, whom I had not met for so long a time; and Scotland, which I had never seen at all,—but which was painted by my friends in most seductive colours, prevailed over all my Liverpool resolutions; and I left Manchester in the mail for Carlisle; and departed from thence in the Royal Charlotte Diligence for Edinburgh, with a merry old man of the name of Mannan, who

held a respectable situation in the Stamp-Office, Somerset House. The whimsical, good-natured irritability of this gentleman, who was my sole companion, rendered our journey irresistibly comic to me: he found fault with every thing, and paid the waiters liberally; abused the Land of Cakes more than ever the great lexicographer had done; and damned the crows for visiting such a soil, when they had good strong black wings to carry them any where else; and yet he could not give me one single substantial reason for his discontent. We met with the greatest attention and civility wherever we stopped; got a good broiled fowl for dinner on the road; and were finally set down in excellent quarters, at the Bull's Head, at the top of Leith Walk. As I was more than in time for my engagement at Bamff, where my friends at present were,—I determined, instead of proceeding by diligence or chaise, to go to Aberdeen by sea, and lay out the difference of expense in a few days' residence in Edinburgh, in order to see all I could get access to in that classically interesting capital. Mr. Mannan, who was a good traveller, and a thoroughly experienced man of the world, advised we should not dine at our inn, because it would be too expensive; so we went to what was called "Comedy Hut,"—a very snug tavern,

kept by a Mr. Hallion, well known as the *autre-fois* Jack Johnstone of the Edinburgh stage: there I again met Mr. Lee Lewes, who gave me a commission to re-engage him with my Manchester managers, and regretted he could not frank myself and friend to the theatre, because it was Mr. Stephen Kemble's benefit. We, of course, paid, and saw Mr. Reynolds's "Notoriety" very well acted, and "Harlequin Highlander" fly from the gallery to the stage. This being the last night of the season, I have greatly to regret it was all I ever had the pleasure of seeing in the theatre of the Caledonian capital.

My companion's business in Edinburgh, which was official, having been effected the following day, he left Auld Reekie very gaily, and me very melancholy: he was a clever callant; and had kept me in a complete succession of laughter the whole time we were wayfaring together. I some years afterwards spent a pleasant afternoon with him in Somerset-place, and now—he is dead.

As he left Edinburgh by a morning coach, Mr. Lee, the master of the house, came to me in the coffee-room, and said, (I give him in his own words) "he hoped I would not again seek my provender abroad, as he had a sort of private *table d'hôte*, which was rather *respaccable* than otherwise; that there were only two gen-

tllemen dined at it *the* day, both of whom he was certain wad be happy to shew attention tul a stranger."

I, who sadly missed my companion, felt quite grateful for this intelligence; and after ascertaining the dinner-hour, proceeded to visit the Calton Hill, the Observatory, went through all the permitted apartments of Holyrood House, sat in the ill-fated Mary's chair, touched the very curtains of her bed, wrought by her own fair hand, beheld the indelible stains of Rizzio's blood, and determined to write a piece on the subject, which I did, and it was acted, with all the splendour of play-bill approbation, about forty nights at Sadler's Wells.

On my return to my hotel, after having brushed off my Edinburgh dust, I was introduced to the dinner-table and the only two guests, who were the Earl of Dundonald, and his son, then a boy, the present Lord Cochrane. I was taken rather by surprise when their titles were announced, but was perfectly at my ease in five minutes. The earl spoke of chemistry, which I knew some few terms of; but conversation got more general, and theatricals being happily introduced, I, keeping myself quite on guard, lest the idea of dining with an actor

might lessen their lordships' freedom of conversation, exhibited just enough of my knowledge of the London theatres, to pass for a tolerably well-informed amateur, and we parted with all the politeness imaginable. Observe, reader! had any direct question, or cause why, occurred, as to my declaring who or what I was, I should by no means whatever have declined the proper explanation; but unless asked for, as the landlord gave me no name, I saw no reason to volunteer it.

These noblemen left Edinburgh on the day following; and then having observed my landlord had a lady-looking wife, two smart sons, and a fascinating niece, who all dined together with an occasional guest,—I told him, unless I could be of the family party every day, I would not stay for the Aberdeen vessel, which was waiting for a wind, but set off by next day's coach.

Mr. Lee professed to feel quite flattered; and when I asked his terms, said "Leave aw to me." I shall just add here, that nearly a fortnight after, when I called my bill for board, (wine or spirits I paid for as I ordered them,) his account for breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper was given in these words:—"For food for a waif birkie fourteen days, 1*l.* 8*s.* and a pint of claret to be

spent at parting." The bed-rooms of the house belonged to a Mr. Robinson, and were a distinct concern: the charge was 1s. 6d. nightly.

This friendly Boniface took me to see the markets, and what else he could show me in his way: he had purchased a tasty little villa a mile or two from Edinburgh, called Spring Gardens, which had been built as a retreat from theatrical bustle by Mr. Digges, once a proprietor of, and an actor of no small celebrity at, the Edinburgh theatre. Many interesting vestiges (to a theatrical man) of the former occupant's professional taste yet remained; and with my landlord's family, and some of his friends, I passed several pleasant afternoons at this very pretty retirement.

Mr. Parker, of equestrian celebrity, built a very beautiful minor theatre immediately behind my hotel; and an individual of the *corps* thereunto belonging ran away with the daughter of our dormitory department.

I was nearly a fortnight in Edinburgh before the wind served for Aberdeen; but I had plenty of amusement in viewing the Heart of Mid-Lothian; and when the weather confined me within doors, my pencil and my violin made the time "unco shortsome." My good-hearted landlord not only accompanied me on board, with his

sons and the lovely Miss ——, his niece; but kindly anticipating a desideratum I had not thought of, made one of his waiters bring down a basket-full of cold fowls, ham, &c. &c. with a bottle of farintosh, a wee puckle o' saut, and other sea store, which was sufficient for a week's consumption, and for which I only gave offence by offering to pay. At length, I was left alone among as motley and disagreeable a crowd of passengers as can well be imagined. When I had agreed for my passage, and viewed the accommodations of the vessel, all appeared perfectly clean and comfortable, though not quite so magnificent as his Majesty's yacht; but now the places I expected to occupy were filled by women, among whom neither cleanliness, nor any other usual female attraction, was very conspicuous. Above fifty paupers, of both sexes, crowded the deck; and my going below, for reasons just stated, was impossible. On my two former marine trips to Margate and to Hull, I had not suffered the least inconvenience from that dreadful nausea, which was now accelerated by the every thing but pleasant objects, either to the eyes or nose, that surrounded me. At length, the effect was too much even for youth and good spirits to surmount; and as I have seldom met with trouble, but some sudden

and unforeseen relief counteracted it ; so, on this occasion—but, reader ! did you ever see Liston portray a qualmish passenger in the farce of “ John of Paris ? ” Not a sea-sick voyager that ever crossed the ocean, but might have

Cried, that was levell’d at me.

I, at least, know, if I may be allowed the figure, he looked very like what I felt, when abruptly turning to ask the captain a question, he, foreseeing what was coming, and not approving the doctrine of

Venienti occurrere morbo, —

turned his back, exclaiming, “ Go to leeward, sir ! go to leeward ! ” I hardly knew where I went ; but on recovering a little, and hearing a general titter, or rather laugh, all round, and in my heart execrating the unfeeling brutality of my fellow-passengers, I beheld a poor devil of a dog, which, like Ursula’s lover in “ the Padlock,” was “ rather lank, and of the greyhound make,” and equally afflicted with myself,—had mistaken one of my boots (which was fashionably wide, and my leg not so well able to fill it as it would now) for a receptacle of a very different kind ; and *hinc illæ lachrymæ*, or, to translate it, *lucus a non lucendo*, hence this roar of laughter, which was silenced by an equally ludicrous

incident, but one where a very tragical termination might have been expected.

A sort of Mrs. Howden, or rather a Mother Balchristie, on the deck, suddenly screamed out "See tul him! see tul him! my gude man on the poop o' the vessel! O, sirs! he's on fire! put him out! put him out!" To our great astonishment, we beheld a little man actually enveloped in flame, around whom a rope was suddenly twisted, and *sans façon*, as the readiest mode of "putting him out," he was impelled into the surrounding wave, and as instantaneously dragged on deck, when it was discovered that the rope had slipped from his waist to his neck; and the poor fellow (although he shortly recovered) had actually undergone the triplicate horrors of burning, drowning, and hanging. The poor fellow was a merchant (in small wares) of Aberdeen, who, in English country towns, are content to style themselves shopkeepers: he dealt in every thing; and, accompanied by his lady, had been to Edinburgh, to make purchases, among which he had bought some phosphorus, which unluckily igniting in his pocket, occasioned the alarming incident just related.

A heavy shower of rain succeeded this hubbub; and unable to eat, and excluded from any thing in the shape of a cabin, I was glad to be

wrapped up in an envelope of sail-cloth; and impelled by fatigue and my late involuntary exertions, I fell into a sound sleep, which lasted till about five in the morning, when I think I never more poignantly felt the visitation of hunger. Delighted at this certain symptom of health, how did I bless the *prévoyance* of my kind friend Lee, of the Bull's Head, at the top of Leith Walk, for filling my basket so abundantly! and how did I anathematise the dishonest and unfeeling voracity of those on board, who had devoured every atom of my chickens, my ham, my manchets, and my "wee puckle o' saut;" and not only drank every drop of my farintosh, but feloniously, and without the fear of any thing before their eyes, conveyed away my bottle!

The captain, who appeared broken-hearted at this "ill deed," sold me some dry biscuit, and whiskey and water, at his own price; and I had no other refreshment or consolation, till the wind being opposed to us, we put in, towards the second evening, at a wee-bit toonie, called Stonehaven,—where, as all hands went on shore, I got a good supper, some whiskey punch, (the acid for which was obtained by burning lumps of sugar between a pair of red-hot tongs,) and not only an excellent, but, as folks say in Dublin, an

elegant bed, all at the private house of a young tailor and his fair partner, at whose recent wedding, the said bed and draperies had been imported, not from Edinburgh, but from the great metropolis of England : indeed, from the pattern of the bed furniture, I almost began to think I might myself have sold it them, on Sir Billy's account ; but as no *pens* protruded from the ticking, and the curtains were full enough to draw closely round, and of sufficient length to reach the surrounding carpet,—I became convinced that I was in error.

The Scotch, we are told, are carefully economical: is it to be believed, then, that my host and hostess, who had much enjoyed our over-night “cracks,” and joined in singing “The meal was dear short syne,” and “Tullochgorum,” and “Poor Jack,”—refused any other remuneration “i' the morn,” than what I pleased to give, which, by the by, is generally a profitable appeal to the guest's pocket, if he be aught liberal ; but here it was otherwise : Mr. and Mrs. Anderson refused to take more than half what I offered, and with difficulty permitted me to pay one shilling for my bed, which they deemed I was entitled to, on having satisfied them for tea, supper, grog, and breakfast.

As the wind set fair early in the morning, and the captain promised to land us in Aberdeen

“the night,” I purchased another day’s stock of provision, to which I silently exclaimed, in recollection of my recent loss,—

He must fight hard, my friend! who takes thee from me.

The captain was better than his word, and in a fine afternoon we went on shore, and I was snug in a parlour of the New Inn of Aberdeen. The Honourable Mr. Dowlass’s wardrobe (stage and street) had now increased to the considerable bulk of one trunk, the old valise, a port-manteau, and three bundles (I don’t exaggerate); and at my leaving the vessel I was surrounded by long-cloaked females, who insisted on helping to carry “the gentleman’s” things on shore, for which I paid them, first out of my pocket, and afterwards (as I discovered) out of my bundles, from which several articles (as silk stockings, &c. hastily put up, on quitting Edinburgh at a short warning) had been, “somehow or other,” very cleverly subtracted.

I again enjoyed profound repose; and, disagreeable as my voyage had proved, it was of service to my health. In the morning, a gentleman, from merely seeing I was a stranger, showed me the college, and what else was thought worth inspection in the Old and New Town; and no objects were more to my taste than the two the-

atres, lately open at the same period, and each a scene of successful competition,—my friend Jones and his partner occupying one, and Mr. Jackson, *ci-devant* manager of Edinburgh, the other,—which, *mirabile dictu*! was also a chapel, in which divine service was alternately performed with the profane effusions of Shakspeare and O’Keeffe.

I now learned there was no other conveyance to Bamff than by post-chaise or on horseback,—a distance of forty-five miles; but I wanted to see the country at my leisure; and having been always very partial to a pedestrian tour, I entrusted the carrier with what my late fellow-voyagers had spared me of my luggage, and set out immediately, on foot, for my destination. I eat and enjoyed a very hearty dinner at Old Meldrum, and reached Chapel o’ Segate, thirty miles from Aberdeen, time enough for my late fellow-traveller Mannan’s favourite supper,—a broiled fowl; and I fear I must plead guilty to having eaten almost a whole one. I had now but fifteen miles to go, and slept till late in the morning, and then deliberately enjoyed a downright Caledonian breakfast of eggs, toast, honey, marmalade, savoury pies, and cold meats; and in a sort of saunter, rather than a walk, I saw the beautiful bridge of Bamff, and the towers of Duff House, two

miles before me, at about five o'clock on a fine July afternoon. That I might not be precipitated into the presence of my old friends, (but now managers,) without first making my toilet, I had retained a change of linen and hose in a small paper parcel; and when I came into the beautifully wooded and watered domain of the Earl of Fife, I chose a romantically sequestered spot, where a broad brook, hastening towards the Doveron, invited either to allay thirst, or for ablution;

Or drink in silence, or in silence lave:

and I determined not, as Jack Johnstone would say, to "lave" it, till I had rested on its banks, and was cool enough to venture both drinking and a bath; then, with an elastic step and re-invigorated frame, in less than half an hour I encountered the curious, but not unmannerly gaze of men, women, and wee-bit weans of the smart little town of Bamff. I did not exactly like to ask for the theatre, but trusted to my penetration in finding some building which, by a temporary portico, or a placard, or a "box, pit, and gallery" inscription, might betray itself; for as I was bowed and courtesied to by many respectable people, I felt diffident of resigning the undefined and imaginary rank gratuitously assigned me,

by abruptly declaring myself a mere actor: but I did not know these folks, or this false shame had been spared me; for never was I in any place treated with more respectful, hearty, and familiar hospitality by nobility, gentry, and all classes, than I was in Bamff, when they *did* know I was an actor; as shall “be made known when there shall be no need of such vanity.” At length, I saw that centre and *dépôt* of intelligence in all country towns,—a barber’s shop, and in it a wig, which, if not drest and powdered for the character of Lingo, must be meant for something or somebody still more *outré*: so as I had not used my razor at the brook, I sat down to a very complete Dicky Gossip of the northern school; and, in return for the loss of my beard, learned the theatrical life, character, and behaviour of every individual on the Bamff stage; heard a high character of my friends Jones, and their partner Hamilton; and the tale was finished by announcing that a vastly clever young man, at singing, painting, and acting, of the name of Merchant, from the Theatre-Royal Manchester, was hourly expected, to reinforce the company.

CHAP. VIII.

1792.

 “Auld lang-syne.”

Reception at Bamff—Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton—*Début*—Apollo and Sir Francis Gripe—Procession to St. Paul’s—Polonius—Baillie Imlach—Earl of Fife—Countess of Finlater—Good benefit—Departure for Inverness—Good company on the road—Cullen—Elgin—The blasted heath—Banquo’s pillar—Forres—Inverness—More of my grandmother—London theatricals—Fort George—Inverness Theatre—Culloden—Lord Lovat—Fall of Foyers—Macbeth’s castle—Acting and scene-painting—Profits of my tour—Departure—Inauspicious beginning of voyage to Newcastle—Put in at Gardenstown—Storm—Peterhead—Newcastle—Farewell to Scotland.

QUITTING the shop of my barbatic, and pursuing the road by which he told me I should find the theatre, I accidentally encountered my friend Mrs. Jones, who received me as a brother, and conducted me to a very sonsie dwelling, which her husband had taken, jointly with his partner, Mr. Hamilton, (a very nice man in a cocked hat,) who always smiled, and that

“withouten guile :” his wife, a very fine woman, joined my old friends in every hearty expression of welcome ; and after my long walk since breakfast, I need not observe that I sat down to a late dinner, not wanting an excellent appetite ; the two managers and manageresses, who had already dined, taking their coffee at the same time. Provisions were excellent and incredibly cheap, poultry in particular ; fine fowls eight pence a couple, port fifteen pence per bottle, and claret very little more ; all which would be *infra dig.* for the pen of an historian to notice, only I wish it understood that even actors here could, without extravagance, (especially where two families combined expenses,) live in luxury on a small income. My old friends and I had many past incidents to recur to, and might have sat long at table ; but as theatrical duties were imperative on them, we adjourned the *sederunt* till supper-time, after which I was informed by my kind masters and mistresses I should find a good bed and a pleasant room in their house on the very uncommon condition per week of paying nothing. I had often heard of “ warm-hearted Irish attachment,” the motto of which was,

Live in my heart, and pay no rent ;

and now found it realized by two English, and

two Caledonians, in bonnie Scotland, where I met with nothing unpleasant but the necessity of leaving it, unless we notice a disappointment to be recorded in its proper place, relative to which no *living* mortal, myself excepted, was to blame ; though it has been thought that Lady Macbeth—not the mimic representative of her, but Lady Macbeth herself—had a hand, if not a foot, in it.

I came to make myself useful ; so at supper it was arranged, that as Jones, usually their Braham, had to go to Inverness for his next license, I should on the following evening make my appearance in his part of Apollo in “Midas ;” and as the people of Bamff longed for some London sights, I immediately set about painting the late procession of George the Third to St. Paul’s. The characters I played, which were of my own choosing, in the ensuing week, were Sir Francis Gripe, and Polonius ; and after performing the latter, I was invited to supper by Baillie Imlach, of the Bank, &c. who had never seen Polonius attempted but as a buffoon, and was afterwards pleased to express his approbation of my style of reading the part by many substantial proofs of patronage : he introduced me to the Dowager Countess of Finlater, and to the Earl of Fife, who gave me the liberty of all his gardens and grounds, from Duff

House to the bridge of Alva, where, at his lordship's dairy, we had strawberries and cream in perfection: no grounds in Britain were more luxuriant, or better laid out. For my benefit, I painted a panoramic view of Duff House, Lady Finlater's mansion, with the town and beautiful bridge of Bamff, which is ornamented by the classic chisel of Mrs. Damer: I also wrote an accompanying descriptive song. I am still grateful for the patronage with which I was honoured: a full house, and no inconsiderable *cadeau* from almost every leading family in the place, were much less gratifying than the condescension and personal notice I was favoured with; nor was there any one instance, where kind familiarity in private was not extended to public recognition on all occasions. I have lived to see this differently done in London, even by notables who are styled "Liberals."

Lady Finlater, on my taking leave of Bamff, presented me with a letter to her son, the Earl of Finlater, desiring him, as I passed through Cullen, to show me the pictures, gardens, and other *agrémens* of Finlater Castle: her ladyship also honoured me with letters to the principal officers at Fort George, as well as to some leading families at Inverness. The Earl of Fife and the worthy magistrate added some introductory notices, which were of great importance

to me at Inverness, particularly one to (I won't say *Mr.*) Frazer of Lovat, which was nobly attended to: I cannot be suspected of flattery towards those patrons, for, unfortunately, I have to repeat, they are all no more. The theatre at Bamff was in the assembly-room, and held about twenty-five pounds: the theatrical company, few in number, were like a family; and theatricals were in so much favour, that not only the manager's receipts were profitable, (his expenses being about ten pounds nightly,) but the benefits were all good, and accompanied by no inconsiderable number of douceurs: each of the little establishment therefore quitted Bamff with regret; and few, but left many regrets behind them.

The managers paid the travelling expenses of their *corps*, and sent them in advance to Inverness: two post-chaises conveyed Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, and myself. On ascending a steep hill some miles from Bamff, we were overtaken by two or three carriages, in which were the Countess of Finlater, and a party on a pleasure excursion. One of the gentlemen begged us to walk up the hill, as her ladyship was going to take a Scotch breakfast at the house of a friend on the road, and would feel happy in taking us as por-

tion of her party; and at this Scotch breakfast we staid till past the hour we had intended to dine; and after eating, drinking, singing, and dancing, once more took leave of our truly noble Caledonian patrons, but not till I had the honour of a place in the travelling carriage of the Countess, who, with two friends, was going farther in the direction of our route. Talk of being Lord Mayor!!! O, thought I, that Sir W. could see me now!

At Cullen, Lord Finlater was from home, but his household did ample honour to the letters of the Countess; and our party were not only shown every attraction of the castle, but experienced rather magnificently the hospitality of the house. The next day we were requested by Sir Archibald Dunbar of Portsoy, and some of his friends, to stop at Elgin, and make up an entertainment of recitation, singing, &c. which we did in the Masons' Hall, supped with Sir Archibald and his friends, and by request repeated a similar *mélange* the night following. The "Something New" I had put together at Eastbourne, formed the foundation of the said two nights arrangements; and after being handsomely remunerated, we next day asked,

How far is't call'd to Forres?

We passed the spot where Macbeth is said

to have encountered the sibyl trio, and where we met many weary, but no weird sisters; and beheld a rude stone, as if commemorative of the encounter, called to this day, “Banquo’s Pillar.” On arriving, in the evening, at Inverness,—I found a letter, which had preceded me, from my grandmother, Mrs. Pitt, from which (as it was the last I ever received from her, and contains a slight portion of theatrical history,) I shall make a short extract:—

August, 1792.

“Mr. Colman junior, acting for his father, has commenced a suit against Captain Wathen, manager of the Richmond Theatre, for acting the “Surrender of Calais,” “Son-in-Law,” and “Agreeable Surprise,” which are manuscript property. The alterations and improvements in our theatre (Covent Garden) proceed rapidly, but not a stick or stone yet laid for new Drury. I went the other night to see Mr. King in Falstaff: I suppose it was great, but yet I liked it not: he undoubtedly understood the author well; the rest was wanting. I well knew his physical inability for the character; but curiosity led me, and, woman-like, I went. I almost envy you the opportunity you have of viewing so many antiquities (particularly relative to the drama) as Scotland possesses; and here comes curiosity again: but mine

ought to subside with my capabilities; my health is very bad, and I am on the verge of a grave."

I omitted to mention that we visited Fort George on our journey, and I delivered Lady Finlater's letters to officers, who entertained our party handsomely, showed and explained to us all worth notice in the garrison and fortifications, and wished us much to have staid and got up a play, in the performance of which they would have assisted, but other engagements did not permit it. The road from hence to Inverness appeared to be a military one. It was the eve of a sacrament week when we arrived at Inverness, where we found the theatre by no means in a finished state: it was a very large timber building; and while the carpenters were at work in the interior, I painted all the decorations for the fronts of the boxes and gallery on canvass, which were then easily and quickly affixed: the proscenium was also put up after it was painted. In a week we were ready to open with the scenery from Bamff; but during the six weeks I remained, I continued increasing the stock of decorations, and left it with eight additional new scenes. I also played several nights, yet found time to visit the field of Culloden, and give my letters to Mr. Forbes of that ilk. The house of the

celebrated Simon Frazer was pointed out to me in the market-place of Inverness, and was then a silversmith's shop kept by Baillie —— I forget who. A large stone half-inserted in the earth was in front of the house; and as old superstition had assigned to the said stone some mysterious influence on the destiny of the house of Frazer, visitors from the Highlands of that name seemed to pay it particular respect.

We made a most gratifying visit to the Fall of Foyers;—descriptions of which tremendous and (as it appeared to me) sublime cascade having been given by many a traveller, I shall not obtrude one here, but pass on to the most interesting object (in my estimation) at Inverness, which was Macbeth's castle, or rather the poor, yet rich remains of it; poor as to bulk, or quantity of remaining vestige, but rich in every recollection connected with the kilted usurper of our immortal bard. The fortified lines and approaches to the castle are still very perceptible, though overgrown with weeds, grass, and moss. I am not skilled in fortification, but should imagine that, considering the rude age in which this fortress was built, great knowledge of the art, and much military tact had been displayed. From the spot where the moat below may still be traced, the castle would appear to have been inacces-

sible and impregnable, and in fancy I could hear the crowned victim of deceitful witchery proudly exclaim

Our castle's strength may laugh a siege to scorn ;

or pictured to myself the very rampart, looking towards Birnam, whence the standard-bearers of the tyrant were commanded to

Hang out their banners on the outward walls.

(*Par parenthèse*, I have lately met with another reading of the above, viz.

Hang out our banners—on the outward walls

The cry is still “ they come ;”

and I don't like it :—it reminds me of a Hamlet on a London stage, who, when his mother asked “ Have you forgot me ?” replied,

No, by the rood !

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife :

Would it were *not* so !

Pardon, reader ! I sha'nt intrude another digression till the year 1800.)

The most interesting part of the castle (which I visited at least every other day during my residence near it) was what was described to me, with solemn averment, to have been Lady Macbeth's bed-chamber. Here, then, it is to be

presumed, were those sparks of ambition, which had been created by false prophecy in the bosom of the northern warrior, fanned into active flame by the daring sophistry of his wife's aspiring mind: through that decayed portal he passed, when "the valour of her tongue" had successfully "chastised" and urged him to

— bind up

Each corporal agent to the terrible feat!

Yonder was the hall where "the air-drawn dagger led him to Duncan," whose chamber may be imagined at that extremity, where the crumbling Saxo-Gothic door-way is half choked up with ivy; and, haply, it was at the shattered window above that—

The raven croak'd the entrance of Duncan
Under those battlements.

On this side is the south entry, where the knocking of Macduff appalled the murderer, with whom I return to the chamber of his wife, across which her conscience-stricken spectre seemed to glide, and aspirate,—“Out, damned spot!”—and, mark this, reader! I beseech you! from this chamber I extracted a curious stone, bedded in a recess among the various materials composing the mossy wall: it was encrusted with some composition which gave it the hardness of granite, and I determined to take it to England as a sacred

relic ; promising George Cooke (with whom I corresponded, and who I thought would be as enthusiastic on the subject as myself) a part of it : but a tremendously hot autumn succeeded ; and this substance, which seemed perfectly unmalleable when I purloined it from the thane's apartment, had, by the time of my arrival at Manchester, actually melted into a soft waxy consistence, which Mr. Killer, the surgeon, (ominous name !) decided to be yellow basilicon. A sort of granite dust had adhered to it ; which having for years been hardened by frost, in a situation impervious to a single ray of sun-shine, it had obtained a state of artificial petrification which deceived me. I felt much mortified at being laughed at on this occasion ; but Cooke consoled me, by saying, it might give rise to an idea, which if followed by the researches of some of our profound antiquity-hunters, might lead to important results, and prove either that the heroine, who was filled, at her own desire,

From top to toe,

With direst cruelty,

was troubled with corns as well as conscience ; or else that the doctor, in the fifth act, who was set to watch her somnambulatory motions, might probably, through sudden fright at her ghastly

appearance, have left the unctuous remedy in the lady's chamber.

We opened the theatre with "Douglas" and "Oscar and Malvina," and had no reason to complain of inattention or want of attachment, on the part of the towns-folk, to the lyre of Home or the heroes of Ossian; nor was I by any means dissatisfied at the opportunity afforded me, by the success of the latter, of selling the little Highland wardrobe I had made up at Manchester, at a very fair price, to my friends in Scotland, although such sale held analogy with the homely proverb of "carrying coals to Newcastle;" plaid dresses being so plentiful in Inverness, that, on our first night, audience and actors appeared to have assumed one livery. The hours of the pleasantest summer I ever passed in my life (of course, with the exception of all the summers since I was married) glided but too swiftly away: my benefit turned out well; and to make it better, the managers deducted nothing for the expenses, but presented me with the gross receipt: it was no great sum; but very considerable when compared with my wants. I had been at no expense from the time of quitting Manchester, my travelling being paid for; so that my salary for nearly thirteen weeks, two benefits, sale of my Scotch wardrobe, presents,

and cash for my journey home, sent me on board a pretty little vessel bound for Newcastle with a fuller pocket than I had ever previously been able to boast of, and a state of health, gained by travelling and content, a fine summer and invigorating climate, such as I shall never know again. But though my purse was filled, and my health good, my heart was heavy : I had had, as it were, every thing my own way ; it had been truly a summer without gloom, sadly opposed to the perspective of a winter in Manchester,

Where clouds and storms obscure the sky ;—

and where (as my old friend Bates used to assert) it rains so constantly, that one would imagine its good genius was ever shedding tears over it ; and where my employ at the theatre was by no means so pleasant as it had been “ i’ the North.” My Scotch friends left no persuasive argument untried to induce me to send a letter, instead of myself, to Messrs. Banks and Ward, and were with difficulty led to believe that I had not sacrificed my heart to the charms of some of the Lancashire witches ; but the truth is, I had so strong a presentiment, on quitting England, that I might wish to stay with Jones & Co., and, by so doing, give up all my anticipated prospects of a London engagement,—that by way of safeguard

I had signed an article with my Manchester masters; and though, had I requested it, they might have released me,—yet prudence forbade, and I braved the temptation,—like a man. I must pass over the leave-takings, the kind wishes, the bottles of *this* and the bundles of *that* with which my locker in my *own* little cabin was stored, and of which I was advised to take better care than when on my voyage to Aberdeen: but the caution was needless; there was only another passenger beside myself; and the master and the mate (two brothers of Gardenstown) were much better pleased to add to, than subtract from, the comforts of their companions on board.

We sailed on a fine afternoon; but in a few hours after leaving the Land of Cakes, ill fortune seemed to encounter us: a smart gale sprung up, and we were driven for shelter to the little fishing-town of Gardenstown, where the mother and family of our master and his mate resided, and by whom we were humbly, but heartily entertained. We sailed again in the morning; the mate had a fiddle, the master danced a good hornpipe, and I sang “Poor Jack!” and so many other ditties, that all declared the time was made “vara shortsome,” till towards evening it blew, what the experienced seaman termed “an awfu’ hurricane.” What then must I and my compa-

nion, a lad of eighteen, have thought it! We were told to go below, and a bumping, bellowing night we had of it: the violent motion of the vessel had the effect of making me so extremely indisposed, that I really did not feel a care about the event of the storm, for such it really was. After suffering greatly from the effects usually produced by such a cause, the mate came down, bid us be of courage, and seeing me much exhausted, gave me a glass of whiskey grog, through which and fatigue, I fell into a profound sleep, for how long time I know not; but I was awakened by my fellow-voyager, who, with tears in his eyes, entreated me to "wake up," and come on deck, and be drowned at "ance, for it would be vara awfu' to stay and be just suffocate i' sic an a dark hole as that." Between sleep and waking, I mechanically followed him up the companion-ladder, when, on pushing up the hatchway, the lightning and the billows were so terrific, that water and fire "seemed to contend about us." The master, naturally a placid good-natured man, bade us, in the sternest tone of command, come up at our peril; and suddenly shutting the hatchway, tumbled me down the steps and my companion over me. I got into my birth again, and was so convinced that all effort to counteract our destiny would

be useless, that, strange to say ! in a few minutes I was once more in the arms of the sleepy god. I have heard that imprisoned people dream of liberty, famished folks of feasting ; and in coincidence with such arrangement, there was nothing extraordinary in one who deemed himself an *enfant perdu* by shipwreck, and who had been rocked to sleep by billows, with creaking ship-timbers for his lullaby, should dream of being safe on shore, and hearing a merry peal of village bells. Be this as it may, I was again awakened by my companion's voice, urging me to rise. Quite out of temper at being a second time disturbed, and that from a delightful dream, I angrily refused, and bade him be gone : but he said, " Ne'er fash yersel for guid news, mon ! we're safe i' the bonny harbour o' Peterhead : listen tul the kirk bell, mon !" and I did, and I heard the same bells while awake, which I had heard in my dream ; and we were *bona fide* safe in Peterhead, *minus* our bowsprit, which had been lost, as I think they said, by the pitching of the vessel during the night.

We went on shore, congratulated each other, ate, drank, and were merry : nay, it was a sort of fair at Peterhead, which place was a kind of miniature minor Margate, and boasted of some " vary raspacable gentry" at the time ; and there

was a ball or dance in the evening, which we stayed to join in, and went to view the light-house, and drank whiskey-punch, the acid to which was furnished, as before mentioned, by sugar burnt between red-hot tongs: and we had excellent beds; and, which was the only “fashious thing,”—we sailed for Newcastle in the morning.

And now, God bless thee, Scotland! and thy cities, towns, villages, provosts, baillies, countesses, earls, merchants, masters and mates! and thy Edinburgh ale, and tavern-bills, and landlords like Patrick Lee, and girls like his fascinating niece, who gave me half-a-crown with a hole in it, “yet all in honour;” and thy little silver grog-ladles, three of which I yet have left me; and thy forts, and castles, and cascades, and palaces, and pictures, not forgetting the lucid stream which renovated my weary limbs near the banks of the Doveron; and Mr. Bell, the actor of the Theatre Royal, who welcomed me, in the metropolis, to his freehold of a *flat*, which he had purchased for one hundred guineas: nor let me forget a benison on the lovely young lady who did me the honour to accept my arm up the hill on the day we joined travelling parties with the Countess of Finlater, and who, (the young lady I mean) while the silken-plaided elegance of her costume floated in the breeze, gaily asked me,

with that unsophisticated freedom which is the sure concomitant of innocence, whether I thought I could make an actress of her. Look straight forward, ye squint-eyed daughters of suspicion! and don't imagine I had a wish to repay any kindness I met in Scotland with ingratitude: I can look back on the never-to-be-forgotten summer I passed under the influence of a most auspicious septentrional planet with pleasure unalloyed, because, whether or not inspired with the constant and unvarying instances of unostentatious beneficence and *bienséance* I every where experienced,—I can lay my hand on my heart, and say, I do not believe, during any part of that delightful period, I conducted myself in any one instance in a way to make an ill return for what I met with; or was I the agent of any material fact I could wish to recall. This is not self-praise: I was young; my heart was open to every kind impression; and, however the contrary may sometimes happen, kindness does not often generate its opposite. I shall in future, (as I have done before) as freely blame, as here I have dared to tell the truth in my own behalf; and there are perhaps a point or two to which I shall plead guilty. I went to Scotland unaccompanied by either a compass or a cork-screw, but that was through ignorance: both were

necessary. If I inquired my way in Edinburgh, I, who only understood right and left, was told "tul gang a wee-bit north, turn a thought tul the east, and then, ganging due south, I should just be at hame." Every thing, from claret to very excellent table-beer, was bottled; and when my hearty hosts and hostesses wished me to listen, they always bade me "speak!"

Scotia, farewell! it is some relief to me to think, that should I have the misfortune to die before I finish the remainder of my life, I still shall have recorded, however feebly, my grateful sense of the many, many cheerful moments and rational enjoyments, thy land, thy sons and daughters, bestowed with smiles upon a poor "waif birkie."

CHAP. IX.

1792-3-4.

—
“Next the lover, sighing like furnace.”—*Shakspeare.*

“O thou, whose charms.”—*Padlock.*
—

Newcastle—Manchester—Temporary loss of Cecil and his wife—New Manchester Circus—An unexpected visitor—Important consequences—New engagements—Circus opens—And fails—Domestic calamity—Preston—Bury—Huddersfield—Rochdale—Haverford-West—Carmarthen—Two interesting productions—Joyful news from town—Family superstitions—Departure for the great city.

WITHOUT further incident or impediment, we landed the next day at Newcastle, after a longer and more difficult passage to that town from Inverness, than had for years been experienced: I partook of a merry parting supper with the master, his brother, and the youth who preferred drowning above-board to suffocation in a cabin; and at five o'clock the following morning was in the light coach for Manchester: the journey was particularly uninteresting; I slept great part of the way, and dined the next day with Cecil and his wife, after having paid my respects to Messrs.

Ward and Banks. The season I am about to record, however uninteresting to the reader, (whose forgiveness I therefore solicit) was of great moment to me in many serious instances : brother Cecil and his wife quitted the Manchester theatre on an invitation from Mr. Stanton, then manager at Stockport, Huddersfield, Rochdale, &c. where, though they lost rank, emolument promised better. There were circumstances, however, in the conduct of the Manchester band respecting Cecil, which so much displeased me, that in the event of my brother resigning his situation, I gave in *my* resignation : this was refused by the managers ; but they informed me they were laying the foundation of a magnificent Circus near Ardwick Green, the Islington of Manchester ; and if I would remain to paint part of the scenery, they would make it worth my while : this offer was accompanied by every kind feeling calculated to satisfy my *amour-propre* ; and Cecil strongly advising it, I consented. Some approach to arrogance, or at least a redundancy of self-sufficiency, may appear in this case ; but it may not occur to a metropolitan reader, (or if it should, he may not estimate it worth a thought,) that a young man who could sing “Poor Jack,” paint scenes, play the fiddle, write a farce, get up a pantomime, attempt Sir Francis Gripe, Apollo in “Midas,” Mungo in

the “Padlock,” Darby in the “Poor Soldier,” Captain Valentine in the “Farmer,” and Polonius in “Hamlet;” not to mention all dialects, as the Irishman in “Rosina,” or any thing else, with French and German characters, which I always played at Manchester,—was what is technically called an object (only think of my being an object!) worth a good appointment in a secondary provincial theatre: and such is human nature, that the attention with which, in the truest sense of the word, I had been *honoured* by some of the first people, in so learned and discriminating a country as Scotland, had rather spoiled me for a merely industrious, subordinate, and unnoticed situation in the (as Mrs. Baker would have termed it) “great grand” Theatre-Royal Manchester; and then again,—for it must come out—curse the critics! they may go hide themselves: the ladies are here to be my judges: I could not help it: it might have been a misfortune and not a fault, but it was neither one nor the other—I fell in love, or rather I arose, for I had positively fallen in love a long time before—all the way back, sympathising reader! as far as Beverley and Harrowgate.

Here permit me (for the subject is so interesting, it puts me out of breath) to digress one moment.

I think I said, “as long ago as last Beverley and Harrowgate.” This is the way, my patrons!

in which, some years ago, provincial actors, who visited, what an Irish gentleman called “*itinerant country towns*,” were in the habit of calculating, and recording events by a kind of municipal or local chronology, as thus: my friends, the Jones’s, would say, “Our dear daughter Sophia was born last Beverley, christened the following Harrowgate, and will be five years old next Scarborough twelvemonth:” or, when arranging with a servant, “You came to us last Deal, will be entitled to half a year’s wages come Tunbridge-Wells, and we have had no settlement since the Rochester before last:” or when looking forward, as every body does, to more prosperous times, my friends would cry, “Well, thank Heaven! we shall be better off next town:” or a young actress, on the point of wedlock, would reluctantly consent, provided the ceremony were postponed till the town after next.” To conclude with a less happy subject, a poor actor, who was daily attacked for a small sum by a persevering and relentless creditor, replied to his importunities, “Make yourself easy, my dear sir! you shall, to a certainty, be paid at the end of the town.”—“Which end, sir?” was the creditor’s rejoinder. In after and more prosperous times we began to reckon periods by the dates of fortunate dramatic productions; as “William was hired on the first night of ‘St. David’s Day,’ was paid

out of 'Thirty Thousand,' behaved very rudely through the whole run of 'Family Quarrels,' and went away with the 'English Fleet.'" Counting by this kind of chronology, it will be recollected, that a few Harrowgates ago, I spoke, *cum grano salis*, and with rather timid and delicate allusion, of a young lady related to the manager's family, named Hilliar, with whom Miss Mellon had formed an everlasting friendship, which of course related only to the next world.

Now, as Hamlet says, "it came to pass, and so it was," that one of this young lady's sisters, settled in Bath, happened to pass with her husband on a journey through Manchester, when the wife was suddenly prevented from proceeding on her journey by the joyful circumstance (*travail* being accelerated by *travel*) of giving an addition to her husband's family. This occasioned Miss Hilliar to pay a visit to Manchester; and under the pretence (for to this moment I never thought it any thing else) of borrowing a play-book from the theatre for her manager at Bolton, she got introduced to the prompter and *fac-totum* of the said theatre. Imagine her surprise at discovering in him an old acquaintance: imagine how surprised *I* was, and how delighted at her sister's being not quite "so well as could be expected," which prolonged Miss Hilliar's visit: imagine the ten thousand little attentions neces-

sary to a young lady, a stranger to all in Manchester except to her own relations, who were also strangers, and who could not accompany her to the theatre : imagine our sympathy, when appearing in the venerable collegiate church as joint sponsors for the young lady's little niece : and finally, conceive our surprise, and I was going to add delight (speaking only for myself), at seeing ourselves, some weeks after, hand-in-hand before the Rev. Mr. Griffith at the altar of the same church, in the characters of bride and bridegroom, attended by Miss Daniels, (afterwards, as I believe I have already said, wife of George Cooke, and now Mrs. Windsor of Bath,) Mrs. Francis of the Manchester theatre, and Garret Tyrrell, now deceased ; but when living, as hearty a fellow, and nearly as good an Irish actor, as ever trod the boards.

Mrs. DIBDIN's sister (observe, I write Mrs. Dibdin for the first time) was not sufficiently convalescent to attend the ceremony, but her husband did, and was to have given the bride away. The antiquities of the old church, which he had had never before inspected, engaged so much of his attention, that he walked whistling up and down the aisles, till the officiating clergyman having asked in vain who would give "this woman to this man?" receiving no answer, and having again inquired, "Is there no one to give

the lady away?"—I, in the tremor naturally attendant on so awful a situation, anxious that the ceremony should want nothing to make it complete in all its parts, was on the point of saying "*I will, sir, with the greatest pleasure,*" which would have been rather *mal-à-propos*;—but Garret Tyrrell, without a word, assumed the office of father, and never had son more reason to be grateful than myself.

Besides the above party, George Cooke, John Moorhead, (of whom hereafter,) and Mr. Riley, the author of "*the Itinerant,*" and several dramatic pieces, —either dined, or passed part of the day with us; and so pleasant did I find this wedding day, that for years I wished (and now there is no danger) that I might never see another.

A year or two prior to this, some "damn'd good-natured friend" had, without the slightest shadow of a foundation, reported to my relatives and friends in town, that I was rather indiscreetly married to a lady of Liverpool. My mother, very anxious on such a subject, wrote to catechise me; and after receiving my solemn assurance that I had not at that time even an attachment, to make that "assurance double-sure," my good mamma wrote to a sort of "man of the world" friend of mine in Manchester;—not a theatrical man, but much too correct to be

member of such community ;—who, after cross-examining me for half an hour, and cautioning me against “ throwing myself away,” (only conceive, Tom Dibdin thrown away !) called me back, and seriously said, “ Well, you declare you are not married ? confess honestly, have you any other temporary *liaison pour passer le temps* ? because such a folly you may own, as being not quite *so bad* as the other.”—Well said, old Sanctity ! and “ *Virtue*” is engraved on this man’s tomb-stone ! I think I see my mother’s face, when I, in as gentle terms as I could, informed her afterwards of the moral zeal of a sectarian, of whom she had heard much, but knew nothing. I should not have felt happy without that mother’s approbation of my marriage, and was going to intrude here a letter, which, to her great credit, she wrote to my wife, which would not have disgraced the pen of an Inchbald ; but its delicacy and tenderness would interest but few, and those few will appreciate the justness of a second thought, which re-consigns the letter to my portfolio.

If, while writing on a subject more interesting to myself than any thing else in this beautiful specimen of autobiography, I may seem to have forgotten of how very little consequence it may appear to most of my readers, I shall briefly add, that readers of the very first class (that is,

lady readers) often dwell with much delight on the *minutiæ* of the Honourable Mr. Greville's marriage with Lady Sophonisba Sugarcane, or Lord Winlove's union with Miss Fanny Fineyes in a romance: and therefore, why may not I flatter myself that the veritable nuptials of T. D. P. P. P. P. painter, prompter, poet, and performer of the Theatre-Royal Manchester, with a young actress, of much professional merit and much more private worth, will be found interesting to some one or two at least of my perusers? Besides, I have promised to submit all my errors and all my good deeds impartially to the public, and (as Gray says) to be honestly "exact, my own defects to scan," in order that the said public may profit from my experience. I happen to think with reason, thank God! that the said marriage was one of my *very* good deeds; and if you think to the contrary, ladies and gentlemen! you have only to

Learn to be wise by others' harm,
And you shall do full well.

The above important and never-to-be-forgotten event took place on the 23d of May, 1793.

The New Manchester Circus was finished and opened shortly after this, and at a considerable expense; but Circuses (as I have since had ad-

ditional and melancholy proof) will sometimes fail. The Romans, as we read, once, if not oftener, importuned their rulers for

Panem et circenses;

and, I presume, obtained both; but, by favour of the good folks of Manchester, we had *circenses* without getting the *panis*. I say *circenses*, because there were two: Philip Astley opened a very large temporary building or booth in Oldham-street, where, with horsemanship only, he performed to seventy pounds per night. Our Circus was a new and elegant theatre, far superior to the then Theatre Royal: our genuine burlettas, and comic dances and pantomimes, (at that period the only species of entertainment permitted in a minor theatre,) were performed by the very best burletta and pantomime performers from London, with Mrs. Parker for our Columbine, and Holland as our *maitre de ballet*. Astley, as before observed, had no stage-representation; and that our horsemanship was considerably better than his, will be credited when I enumerate Messrs. Parker, Smith, and Crossman, as its leaders: our band, led by the two Moorheads, was numerous and excellent; and I am sure I need not say less of the scenery, after having declared *myself* one of the artists:

to be serious, that department was executed by Mr. Wilkinson of Chester, Mr. Bunn of Norwich, Mr. Kniveton, Mr. Quantrell, (all dead,) and myself. And yet, *mirabile dictu!* Philip the Great, in his wooden *marquée*, with twelve horses, four fiddlers, and two comic songs, was actually in the receipt of the sums I named;—while our beautiful house, built at the expense of some thousand pounds, and conducted on the most liberal scale, opened its doors the first night to about seventy-three pounds, which not very gradually came down to the dreary *diminuendo* of fifteen, a sum unequal to one fourth of the current expense, independent of the building, wardrobe, &c. How is this to be accounted for? Messrs. Banks and Ward were high in favour with the Manchester public; and the few who came to see us applauded “even to the echo:” by whatever caprice or fatality the misfortune was caused, I cannot pretend to divine; and can only lament to add, this is not, by more than one or two, the only instance in which the judgment of the “liberal and enlightened public” has shown its unquestionable incomprehensibility.

Retrenchment was necessarily the word, and salaries, among other articles, were to be reduced. At this time Mr. Stanton made a liberal

offer (on his scale) to myself and wife, to join his company at Bury, Lancashire, (brother Cecil was also there,) with the magnificent inducement of "all the low comedy line" held out to me, and the first comic and operatic business for my better half. We therefore relieved Messrs. Ward and Banks of our two salaries and selves, and I believe, (as they have often assured me since,) both our managers were exceedingly sorry to part with us: they desired us, should we find our new situations ineligible, to apply to them for re-engagement at the opening of the Theatre Royal, which would take place in three months, but we were destined to travel a different road.

When I just now brought brother Cecil upon the scene again, were you not, reader! surprised at my making no mention of his wife? who, you may remember, I declared to be no small favourite of mine, and, I may add, of all who knew her: to be one of the latter, however, was a happiness not reserved for my own wife. The melancholy fact is, Cecil had become a widower; and here permit a very few lines, in proof of the instability and uncertainty of all human arrangements.

About a fortnight prior to my marriage, I was passing along the principal street in Manchester,

on a visit, which, having just parted from my bride elect, was to me of the next greatest importance, as every young lady and every young gentleman (supposing them as particular in certain matters as I was then) will readily admit, when I announce that I was going to my tailor's to order my wedding habiliments: you see how loth I am to quit this subject. I was met on my road by the postman, who presented me with a sable-sealed letter: it was from Cecil. His wife, poor Mary! had, only two nights before, performed, without apparent difficulty or fatigue, the rather arduous character of Diana in "Lionel and Clārissa," and Louisa in O'Keeffe's "Farmer." She was remarkably cheerful at supper, joked with her husband about my approaching marriage, and spoke with great animation of the pleasure she hoped would probably soon result from my rejoining their society, and bringing them a sister: four hours after it was found necessary to call in an accoucheur, and in less than four hours more poor Mary was a corpse, with her infant reposing also in death upon her arm. Cecil had, in less than the preceding sixteen months, lost five children: he was now a widower with one daughter, afterwards adopted by my wife.

This calamity happened at Preston; and as

the mayor of the town had been Mary's medical attendant, the mayoress and her large family of daughters felt great interest in my brother's misfortunes; and, indeed, the whole town paid him very marked attention. I scarcely need say, that the visit I was going to pay when I received Cecil's melancholy letter, assumed a very opposite complexion: instead of the nuptial habit, I ordered a suit of mourning, got leave of absence from the theatre, and set off immediately for Preston; where, after supporting my brother's spirits, while my own were very, *very* seriously depressed, I had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing the most pointed tokens of respect paid to the remains of my sister, at whose funeral were seen the female part of almost every respectable family in Preston: and, (a favour voluntarily conferred by the principal clergyman) she was interred within the church. A modest inscription, engraved on a tablet of brass, is affixed to a pillar immediately above the place of her repose.

“ And all this fuss about a country actress!” Why, in France, I grant, she would have hardly been allowed a grave at all: but, thank God, my dear friends! we are in England; and the public of Preston, particularly the ladies, evinced all this sympathy and kindness, not because the de-

ceased was an actress, however a favourite even in that capacity, or that she was one of the prettiest women you would see in a thousand ;—but because she was a female of exemplary conduct, whose attentions to her husband, and afflictions at successively losing four children, had created an interest in her behalf, which the melancholy climax of her own sudden death, while enduring with fortitude those agonies calculated to endear the sex to all, had heightened to a degree perhaps without a precedent. A month afterwards, a final and substantial tribute of respect was paid her memory at Cecil's benefit, which was the most crowded and respectably attended house of that or many seasons.

On quitting Manchester, we did pretty well at Bury ; but at Huddersfield, our next town, we were merry, happy, and had each a good benefit : and here I published my first farce of “ Sunshine after Rain,” together with a collection of songs, epitaphs, elegies, and other matters I supposed were poetry, and called in my title-page “ Fugitive Pieces.” From hence we went to Rochdale, where happening to hit on some subjects for comic songs, which accorded most fortunately with the taste of the town, I was so frequently called on, that even when Mr. Bowden, of Covent-Garden Theatre, a great favourite and a

native of Lancashire, (the county we were in) joined us as a star, he observed, it was scarcely worth his while attempting to sing where another performer was called for at the close of every act. "Sunshine after Rain" produced me a few, and but few pounds by its publication, and then bad weather seemed likely to succeed the *sun-shine*. The town of Rochdale was very much opposed in its views relative to the formation of a canal, and a rich and powerful manufacturing firm near Bury were among the principal opponents: the Rochdaliens, however, gained their point; and I was strongly solicited by many of the principal inhabitants to write a song in celebration of the victory, and this said song raised my popularity to its very acme in Rochdale, but not out of it. Bury was a town in Mr. Stanton's circuit; and the head of the firm above alluded to took such vehement offence at one line in my lyrical rhapsody, that I soon found, from the cold looks of the manager, I had

Done some strange offence,
Which look'd disgraceful in John Stanton's eye.

Pour moi, quite unconscious what that offence might be, I resented the grumpy manners of my chief so much, that he at length hinted at probable injury to his interests, and the *awk-*

wardness of my accompanying him to Bury, after I had been so imprudent as to write and sing—

And now that we have got the *fruit*, Old Nick may take the **PEEL** :

he had received intimation that great offence was given by me, and,—“Great offence is *taken*,” interrupted I, by the same person; “so let us part ‘at the end of the town,’ as freely as we met.”

My wife, who was very much patronised, and a great favourite with all the town, had just had a very productive benefit; I, therefore, demanded mine, which was speedily fixed; and it will easily be credited that the townsfolds,—with whom I before stood tolerably high, and who now (for the circumstance was generally known) considered me a martyr in their cause,—made me a benefit, which proved to a guinea what the New Theatre would hold, and shook its walls a few times with true Lancastrian plaudits; after which we bade Rochdale a grateful farewell, and went on a long-promised visit to some of my wife’s family at Birmingham, where we stayed a week or two, and continued our way to a very promising engagement I had made with Mr. Masterman, of the Swansea, Carmarthen, and Haverford-West theatres: at the latter town we joined as good-hearted and honest a little ma-

nager as ever had to boast of a shrewish wife, and a company of actors who governed him at pleasure. Our journey to Wales was performed in the depth of winter, with my wife in a very advanced stage of expectancy (being her first appearance in that character) as to whether we were to be blest with a daughter, or a son and heir. We travelled all night, and happily had the mail to ourselves; when in the midst of a snow-storm between Monmouth and Abergavenny, an axle-tree broke, but so easily, that we received no harm, except that of walking three miles before we saw a cottage: and, at one o'clock in the morning, disturbed a whole family at a little inn, known by the sign of the Cross Buckets; and never did travellers enjoy a brown loaf and a jug of genuine Welch *cruw* more than we did. My poor, fatigued, and frozen wife's request, on being introduced to the first specimen of Welch bread she had seen, was,—“Pray, allow me to cut that corner of the loaf myself.” Our Cambrian hostess, with many short courtesies, handed a knife; and coupling my wife's anxiety with her evident situation, observed, with a smile, “I suppose, Madam, it is some ceremonies you would perform, to bring you good luck.” We were truly happy to learn we could have a bed; and were at length shown into

a room of rather extensive size, but of which two-thirds were concealed by a large baize curtain drawn across; and our satisfaction was a little allayed by discovering that landlord, landlady, and all their children reposed together behind the said useful drapery. Our own bed was none of the best, but our sheets were beautiful, while fatigue imparted every other good quality; and having been told by coachee the mail would call for us next day, we slept soundly and happily, till in about two hours we were most unexpectedly called to continue our journey, and packed into a post-chaise in common with all the boxes, cases, and packages from the mail: and in this state, every way worse for our short and interrupted repose, we were, with the rest of the lumber, shot out into the inn at Abergavenny, where the supper-table still remained laid for our reception. Supper we, of course, now declined, but were told we must not go to bed, as the mail would be ready in a few minutes: here coachee a second time deceived us,—it did not come for three hours, during which, there being no couch in the room, my wife, quite *abattue* with fatigue, placed her muff under her head, and slept soundly on the hearth-rug before the fire, while I walked about fretting and grumbling, and abusing the people of the inn

for not telling us the truth respecting the coach ; while they, in turn, complained of their misfortune in providing us a good supper which we refused to partake of or pay for.

At length we got safe to Haverford-West, at which town, as well as afterwards at Carmarthen, I wrote and sang a new song at the theatre every week ; and one rainy day, (for it occupied just that time) amused myself with writing a burletta, destined to be my first production in London, and christened it the “ Rival Loyalists, or Shelah’s Choice :” by the same evening’s post I transmitted it to my mother to “ see what could be done with it.” We soon left Haverford-West for Carmarthen, where my wife also gave birth to *her* first production, in the form of a beautiful daughter : one of her sisters came on a visit, and helped to smooth that honourable period of pain and peril.

I now began to be a little serious and contemplative ; and not having any thing better to do, went to the Devil one day (a tavern so called in Carmarthen) to read the London news ; and there, “ Io Pæan !” the first lines which attracted me were in a Sadler’s-Wells advertisement, announcing a repetition of the *favourite burletta* of “ *The Rival Loyalists, or Shelah’s Choice.*” Trifling as the success of such a bagatelle may be deemed,

yet as I imagined it was to form the foundation of my future prospects in the metropolis, it became, in my eyes, of commensurate import, and I ran home with the newspaper to impart my delight to her whom it would most interest, and who had, unknown to me, been equally impatient for my return; having, in my absence, received a letter from my mother, informing us that the piece had been extremely well received, and that the proprietors of the Wells intended making a handsome present to the author; also that Mr. Dighton, who played the principal character, and had been the medium through which the burletta had been presented, was decidedly of opinion, that if I came to London, I might immediately find sufficient employ as a minor dramatist to render the experiment worth making. In order to propitiate the destinies, and insure future good fortune, a favourite superstition of ours induced my wife and self to offer the first-fruits (whatever they might prove) of my London *coup d'essai* to my mother: for though we were not exactly so wedded to nursery prejudices as to call Friday an unlucky day, or go half a mile round rather than walk under a ladder;—yet we fancied that while we highly gratified our mutual feelings by such an humble, though affectionate offering to a good

parent, Providence would be not the less likely to smile on future efforts.

Saints! don't be angry at the idea that any good could emanate from so profane a source; or, if you will be angry, do, and

Let the gall'd jade wince; our withers are unwrung.

After all this fine talking, what did the mighty matter amount to? I was then totally ignorant of what might be the profits of minor theatre authorship: Nancy and I had an argument about it: she expected twenty pounds; I was indignant, and thought, for the credit of "the Islington stage," that fifty would be the remuneration: at last, we agreed on twenty-five. Which was nearest the mark, will best be decided by the information, that the *douceur* was no more nor less than FIVE GUINEAS.

My *cacoethes scribendi* cooled considerably, when the next London letter brought this information, which, to be sure, was qualified with the remark, that in proportion as a writer grew popular, his value would increase, and his remunerations also. Mr. Masterman, our manager, advised me not to resign my situation with him, but permitted me to go to town, from whence, if I found encouragement to remain, I might send for my wife: or, should there be a

necessity for it, I might return and resume my old task of scribbling hebdomadal doggrels for the merry folks of Carmarthen. The latter alternative did not take place; and some time afterwards, I offered a feeble but sincere tribute of grateful respect to my numerous Welch patrons and patronesses, who showed the greatest kindness to my wife during the time she remained a *femme sole* in Carmarthen, by dedicating my farce of "St. David's Day" to the memory of their liberality.

Five o'clock on a beautiful morning saw me perched on the coach-box of the London Fly, which rattled out of the yard of the Bush Inn, Carmarthen. I was saluted, as we passed, with the huzzas of two or three jolly actors, who had set up to call me, as they said; and the waving of a fair handkerchief, by a fairer hand, from between the curtains of my wife's chamber window.

CHAP. X.

1794—1798.

“Benedict, the married man.”—*Shakspeare*.

“Call me not fool, till Heaven hath sent me fortune.”—*ibid.*

The autobiographer twaddleth—Arrival in town—Reception at home—Sadler’s Wells—Sir William Rawlins—Write a second burletta, and resolve to remain in town—Send for my little family—First campaign at Sadler’s Wells—Productions there and elsewhere—Dr. Arnold—Aim at higher game—Mr. Colman—Philip the Great—Pantomimes—John Kemble—Mark Lonsdale—“The Sprite”—Mrs. Baker again—Provincial patrons—Professional hints to incipient actors—“The Raft”—“Little Island”—Maidstone—State trials—“The Jew and the Doctor.”

I SHALL probably be laughed at when stating, that I felt this journey of two days and two nights any thing but pleasant; and that, independently of the anxiety for the event of my trip, I experienced a sort of schoolboy sensation at my first parting from two ladies, one of whom had only been introduced to me by the other a few weeks before: in short, I was wife-sick, and at every inn where

we halted, I gave particular directions to the chambermaid, accompanied by a *douceur*, to pay every possible attention to a lady with an infant, both minutely described, who would *probably* be on their journey to town in the course of a few days.

As soon as I arrived in London (my mother being at Chelsea) I called on brother Charles, who, not having run away from *his* apprenticeship, was steadily “sticking to stocks” in the city ; but he, no more than myself, had escaped the ardour of authorising, having published two volumes of poems, under the modest designation of “Poetical Attempts by a Young Man.” Charles gave me a very hearty reception ; and when he accompanied me to my mother and sister, my arrival made a little holiday : a thousand questions were asked about my wife, my daughter, and my next new burletta, for I had already set about one ; and I was told, that if I called on Mr. Robert Dighton, at Charing-Cross, I should certainly “hear of something to my advantage :” this, however, when I did hear it, implied, “work hard, be very successful, and you will be well paid.”

Dighton next night took me to the Wells, where I was complimented with the *entrée* of the house, and introduced to Mr. Hughes, principal

proprietor; Mr. Arnold, a partner; and the clever, eccentric, and good-hearted Mark Lonsdale, acting manager. My introducer, and the three gentlemen who were the introducees on this occasion, as well as more than two-thirds of the then establishment, are extinct.

Of poor Lonsdale I shall have much to say; some of it, I hope, will not be without interest. It was soon agreed, that I should produce a new burletta, under the title of "The Apparition," and that Mrs. Dibdin should play a principal part in it, and receive a salary during the remainder of the season: should she and my muse succeed, they were both to be regularly engaged for the next year, and myself as an actor into the bargain. My wife, and little Maria, our daughter, soon arrived in town; and a most heart-cheering day we (including Charles, another brother, and a sister) passed at my mother's. In proof that the burletta and the lady both succeeded, I was paid for the one, *encore* five guineas; and the other, as well as myself, was articted for three years.

Just before this burletta of "The Apparition" made its appearance, a piece, written by the late Mr. Cross, was announced at the Haymarket, under the same title; I therefore changed mine to that of the "Village Ghost." A similar

circumstance took place the following season : I was about producing a *petite pièce* called “ Blindman’s Buff, or Who pays the Reckoning ? ”—when an operatic farce by Mr. Arnold (now proprietor of the English Opera) was advertised at the Haymarket, with the latter title. Young men will be young men ; and, warmly tenacious of what I conceived to be a second intrusion on my fancied rights, I wrote to Dr. Arnold, as having known my father, and remonstrated on his permitting Mr. Arnold jun. to usurp my title. I received the following gentlemanly reply :—

“ Sir,

“ Till I read your letter, I never heard of your performance called ‘ Blindman’s Buff ; ’ and I do aver, whatever my son might know of it, he had no hand in giving the present title to his own piece. He had originally called it ‘ The Amazon ; ’ which not being thought pertinent, Mr. Benson hit on ‘ Who pays the Reckoning ? ’ As an old friend of your father, I wish your production every possible success, and am, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ S. ARNOLD.”

9th July, 95.

As soon as I had arranged our future engagements, I thought it prudent (Tom Dibdin prudent again !!) to wait on Sir William Rawlins, who received me with great politeness. I ventured to hope he would not take any steps relative to my indentures which would injure my present views, as my engagements were not sufficiently lucrative to permit my offering any part of the penalty at that time: he told me to be under no apprehension, for I should experience no interruption from him till I was (which he foresaw I should be soon) quite able to pay him; and sent me back to tarry at Jericho till my beard should be grown.

Another thing we deemed essential was to apportion some part of our salary to the use of my mother, who, from the state of her health, did not wish to join our domicile: thus all seemed to smile, till we unfortunately lost our little girl, as we have since lost several others, who rest in the cemeteries of Lambeth, Rochester, Richmond, and Covent Garden.

At this time, I had the pleasure of renewing my friendly intimacy with Mr. and Mrs. Powell of Drury Lane, who had been formerly so kind to me at Liverpool: through their means, we were present at the production of "Lodoiska," as also the splendid spectacle of "The First of

June ;"—a *pic-nic* production of Sheridan, the Duke of Leeds, Lord Mulgrave, and half a dozen other deceased noble contributors : and it was no small gratification for my wife to witness, for the first time, the combined excellencies of Palmer, Miss Farren, Parsons, Suett, Miss Pope, Bannister, Kemble, Wroughton, *cum multis aliis*, not to be found in our lists of modern attraction.

During the seasons of 1794, 1795, and 1796, I produced at Sadler's Wells—

The Rival Loyalists, burletta, music by Reeve.

The Village Ghost, ditto, ditto.

Gaffer's Mistake, ditto, music by Mr. Levesque.

The Death of David Rizzio, serious pantomime, Reeve.

Prospect of Peace, an allegorical burletta, ditto.

Pennyworth of Wit, a burletta,

in which I had the honour of introducing the late Mr. John Davy's *coup d'essai* as a composer in London : Mr. Hughes brought him from Exeter for that purpose.

Ruins of Palluzzi, or the Black Penitent; serious pantomime.

Magician, or Invisible Hand; a burletta.

Alonzo and Imogine, serious pantomime,

in which piece I had the gratification of bringing the late Mr. John Moorhead's talents before

the public, and procured him and his brother Alexander (whom I had left at Manchester) engagements at Sadler's Wells; the latter as leader of the orchestra, and John as tenor, and occasional composer to the theatre. This very talented and unfortunately eccentric gentleman will frequently appear again in the course of my narrative.

My following productions at the Wells were :

Chevy Chace, serious ballet of action ;

at which period, (1796,) on account of Mr. Lonsdale's going to Covent Garden, I was appointed stage manager.

Sadak and Kalasrade, or the Waters of Oblivion ; a serio-comic pantomime.

The Talisman of Orosmanes, or Harlequin made Happy ; ditto.

John of Calais ; serious pantomime.

Jane of Pentonville ; comic burletta.

Harlequin and Hudibras.

The Pyramids, or Harlequin in Egypt.

The two latter were purchased by the house, but not acted.

In the winter vacations I wrote occasionally for the Biographic, Pocket, and Cabinet Magazines, and attempted several dramatic pieces, with a hope to get them acted at Covent Gar-

den and Drury Lane; particularly a five-act comedy, under the title of the "Austrian Hussar," which was presented by Mr. T. Arnold, one of the Wells proprietors, to Drury Lane; but at length returned with so many proposed and opposite alterations, that play and letter were put where I had a great many other irons. I also wrote an opera called "Il Bondocani," which Mr. Harris accepted; and it would have been acted, but Mr. O'Keeffe presented his "Lad of the Hills, or Wicklow Gold Mines;" and my opera was returned for alteration—to be acted five years afterwards. I likewise presented Mr. Colman with a piece; but my hour was not come, as will be seen by his annexed letter, which was "kind enough," but not so much so as some to be seen hereafter.

" 5th Aug. 94, Lower Grosvenor-street.

" Sir,

" I am very sorry you should have had the trouble of calling so frequently at my house: I have now perused the MS. you were kind enough to leave for my inspection: it contains much whimsicality; but I do not think it would, in its present shape, serve the interests of the Haymarket Theatre. Were it carefully revised, and compressed into two acts, it might make a pleasant after-piece. I shall, at all

times, be happy to give early attention to any other production you may do me the favour to send.

“ I am, Sir, &c.

“ G. COLMAN.”

This piece I consigned to a similar fiery end with the “ Austrian Hussar.”

Having thus unsuccessfully essayed admittance to the legitimate temples of the drama,—that troublesome propensity to eating and drinking, which is inherent in provincial and minor authors and actors, as well as in “great grand” London players,—inspired me to buckle to to burletta and pantomime once more; and having stocked the Wells with as much as was wanted, I went valiantly to work on the following attempts, for the Royal Amphitheatre.

Blindman’s Buff, or Who pays the Reckoning? a burletta mentioned above.

The Glazier, ditto.

The Pirates, or Harlequin Woodcutter.

Two Sides of the Question, a burletta.

These four pieces I sold in one day to the renowned Philip Astley, after much hard bargaining, for FOURTEEN GUINEAS the lot: they were all afterwards acted with success. I also sold several songs to Longman and Co. as “the Irish

Newsman," "a Post under Government," "the Muffin Man," &c. for three guineas each :—this was better than writing whole burlettas at from three to five pounds.

The principal difficulty I met with in my negotiation with Mr. Astley, was not merely his wish, but the declaration of his *right*, to name himself in his play-bills the author of my productions. Believe me, reader! it was no impertinent pride of scribblership that made me tenacious on this score: my object, (as I told the equestrian veteran,) in vending my ware at so unassuming a price as fourteen pounds fourteen shillings for three burlettas and a pantomime, was principally the opportunity afforded me of getting my name frequently before the public, and thus reminding the three monarchs of monopoly, at the royal houses, of their promises to take me by the hand on some future occasion: but Philip would not admit this a fair argument, and the following short dialogue was the consequence:—

Burletta-man.—But, Mr. Astley! I should hope you are too much a man of honour to wish to deprive me of any degree of professional credit, however trifling, which may, by bare possi-

bility, result from the exhibition of these bagatelles.

Philip the Great.—Credit? Oh! ah! more credit in fourteen guineas; Eh! and not a light one among 'em? They can't fail: they'll go down, sir! they are jokes that every body will take: Eh! won't they? and your pieces (if you *will* have them yours, Mr. What's your name!) may be damned. Eh! what d'ye think?

Burletta-man.—Then I'm sure you would be still more ashamed of having called yourself their author.

Philip.—They are my pieces for all that.

Burletta-man.—In what way, sir, more than by purchase?

Philip.—You are a young man, and I'll just ask you one question. Did you never see a very large board covering the front of a house in the city, and “Somebody's Yorkshire Shoe Warehouse” written on it in letters as large as one of my son's *descriptions* on the scrolls in our pantomime?

Burletta-man.—Often.

Philip.—You have, eh?—well, sir! you go into *that ere* shop, or any other of the sort, and ask whose the shoes are. “Mine, to be sure!” says Mr. Heath, or Hobson, or whatever his

name. “Ay, but whose make?”—“Mine, to be sure!” says Hobson again, when, zounds! sir, the fellow perhaps never made a shoe in his life: but he bought them, d’ye see? paid for them in the lump, or perhaps in lots of fourteen guineas worth, (as I buy *these here* things of you,) and devilish slim some of them are for the money: and then by that means they are his shoes, his make, and his all round the ring. Eh! just as these *thingumbobs* are mine: d’ye see that? Oho!

Whether I saw it or not, I was too happy to see the fourteen guineas; and when I took them, the hero of the circle said, good-naturedly,—“Now, I tell you what; you *shall* have your name to them, and, for any thing I know, it may do some good;—people may think it’s your father. Eh! what d’ye think?”

Philip, and his successor John, may be added to my obituary, and so may our late worthy Welch manager Masterman; a brief idea of whose good wishes towards us, the following extract of a letter may exhibit: it was received after I had, in consequence of Sir William’s assurances, dropped my *nom de guerre* of Merchant, and re-assumed my own.

“I am sincerely happy to recognise you by your paternal appellation, which I hope you

will live long to wear. Don't sell your pieces too cheaply : you would be surprised, could you witness it, how your songs succeed here ; though, without compliment, they lose much by being sung by others. Remember, should things not please you in London, you and your good wife (whose civilities to my son when in town I would fain repay) have many warm friends in Wales, and none more than," &c. &c.

"HENRY MASTERMAN."

During the second winter vacation, Mrs. Baker invited me to paint scenery for and produce some of our most successful pieces from the Wells, and wished Mrs. Dibdin to play. I went to Canterbury, and got up "Alonzo and Imogene," "Chevy Chace," "Valentine and Orson," and Mr. Lonsdale's Harlequinade of "Baron Munchausen," which was extremely attractive. Mrs. Dibdin first appeared as Rosalind, and immediately became a great favourite, and commenced a friendship with Mrs. Baker which terminated only with the life of the manageress. I also, about this time, produced, at an equestrian theatre in the Lyceum, a burletta called the "Lover's Trial," a musical *mélange*, under the title of "the Whirligig," and another called "the Auctioneer."

As the reader may probably think too much has been said of burletta and pantomime, I cannot resist the temptation of proving the degree of consequence attached to the latter species of entertainment even in the mind of the classical John Kemble, whose subjoined letters on the subject, I am led to hope, are sufficiently curious to warrant their insertion. The ideas of such a man, who was elaborate even on this light subject, will not be without interest: I am indebted for them to Mr. Greenwood, the artist, to whom two of them are addressed: the last, not least, was written to that very extraordinary *décorateur* of Drury-Lane, the late Mr. Johnston, who was as well appreciated and admired by Sheridan as by John Kemble.

Liverpool, July 8th, 1789.

“Dear Johnston,

“I send you the first sheet of my historical procession for the pantomime: I have taken some pains to make it clear in every particular, and I hope they are not thrown away.

The banners, *Anglo-Saxon*, *Dane*, *Saxon Line restored*, and *Norman*, should be very large, and the words upon them in silver, as that will be seen better, I think, than gold:—these banners I call *generical*: they must all be of different

forms. The banners, Rollo, Plantagenet, York, Tudor, Stuart, and Brunswick, should be smaller: these banners I call *specific*: let all be of a very beautiful form, and very richly ornamented.

“The banners on which are inscribed the names of the kings, as ‘Alfred the Great, Founder of the British Monarchy, 872-901,’ ‘Edward the Elder,’ &c. should be all of one shape: let it be round; the ground black, the inscriptions gold, with rich borders, &c. By making these uniform, the names of the kings, and the dates of their reigns, will be more easily distinguished from the other banners: these I call *regal* banners.

“The banner inscribed ‘It is just the English should ever be free as their own thoughts,’ must be a silver ground with gold inscription. Mr. Greenwood will dispose the words in lines, to look as handsome as he can devise. The other banners, as ‘Wittenagemot,’—‘Common Law,’—‘Trial by Jury,’—‘University of Oxford,’—which I call *miscellaneous banners*, should not be of two shapes in the same reign.

“Profile representations of the Ship in Alfred’s reign, the New Forest in that of William Rufus, the Tower in William the Conqueror’s, with cities, castles, monasteries, &c. Mr. Greenwood will regulate as he pleases. The portraits, as

‘Earl of Devonshire,’ ‘Turketal,’ ‘Sweyn,’ ‘Canute,’ &c. must be heads of strong character, and large as life.

“Now I will recapitulate. The *generical* banners must be each of a different form; the inscriptions in large silver letters: the *specific* banners must be of different form, but smaller than the *generical* banners: the *miscellaneous* banners, small, and not of different shapes in the same reign: the *regal* banners to be the only round banners. N. B. All these generical, specific, miscellaneous, and regal banners to be fastened on spears: the profiles and portraits to be carried by men in their hands.

“You will observe there are no arms borne in England before Richard I., and then I give every king his arms and motto on shields of shapes proper to the times. You will be puzzled to point out the proper mottos, I am afraid: the shields must be borne by heralds.

“Our old kings have generally some nickname, as, ‘Ethelred the Unready,’ ‘Edmund Ironside,’ &c.; if you find I have omitted any of them, be so good as to put them on the banners.

“M. A. after a king’s name, means, he was a middle-aged man, which note will serve to show you what sort of person ought to represent him.”

Then follow some further directions respecting kings who died violent deaths, concluding with,

“ If there is any thing you don’t understand, I will explain it; or if any improvement you can suggest, I dare say I shall prefer your opinion to my own.”

His next letter, dated July 30th, says,—

“ Dear Greenwood,

“ Our fine procession, I am afraid, will do us very little good, if we have not some very pretty, short, laughable pantomime to introduce it. I have hit on nothing I can think of better than the story of King Arthur, and Merlin and the Saxon Wizards.

“ The pantomime might open with three Saxon witches lamenting Merlin’s power over them, and forming an incantation by which they create a Harlequin, who is supposed to be able to counteract Merlin in all his designs for the good of King Arthur. If the Saxons came on in a dreadful storm, as they proceeded in their magical rites, the sky might brighten, and a rainbow sweep across the horizon; which, when the ceremonies are completed, should contract itself from either end, and form the figure of Harlequin in the Heavens: the wizards may fetch him down how they will, and the sooner he is set to

work the better. If this idea for producing a Harlequin is not new, do not adopt it. Mr. Lonsdale, the gentleman who makes the pantomimes for Sadler's Wells, seems to me to understand these entertainments very well; and I beg you will immediately communicate to him the foundation on which we wish a pantomime constructed; and know whether he will undertake to prepare it for us. It must be very *short*, very LAUGHABLE, and very CHEAP: the procession to be introduced at the end, by way of amusing Arthur, after all his difficulties, with a prospect of the glories of his descendants."

This procession, (for what reason I don't know) though prepared and nearly ready at great expense, was never exhibited.

At the time of producing some other scenic exhibition, when the Drury-Lane company were performing at the King's Theatre, Mr. Kemble laments, in a subsequent note to Mr. Greenwood, that "these abominable Italians won't let us have the stage till Monday morning."

Lonsdale, who was thus selected by Mr. Kemble, was a very ingenious artist, and no contemptible poet: he produced a farce at Drury-Lane, under the title of "the Spanish Rivals," which, though not very successful, had much

merit : a song in it,—“ Still the lark finds repose,”—is a favourite to this day. At the Wells he produced from twenty to thirty successful pieces.

In another winter's vacation I wrote an evening's entertainment (if I may venture to term it so) introductive of eighteen comic songs, which, by way of *coup d'essai*, and to give it the sanction of a London performance, I first delivered, by the Lord Mayor's permission, at the Paul's Head, Cateaton-street : it was called “ the Sprite, or the Power of Fancy ;” and, having been well attended and received, I gladly accepted an invitation from my Rochdale friends to pay them a visit, which they made worth my while. In memory of my Canal Song, they amply patronized my “Sprite” three nights; and at Preston, where brother Cecil was again residing with a second wife, the family of the former mayor exerted all their interest, and added sterling worth to the “Power of Fancy.”

On my return to town, I accepted the situation of prompter and joint stage-manager at the Wells, still persevering in repeated attempts to induce the Royal Theatres to allow me an experiment. Not finding this practicable, and receiving an offer superior to my Sadler's-Wells engagement from my old friend Mrs. Baker, for the

joint services of myself and wife, to whom Mrs. B. was extremely partial,—I began to think, or to persuade myself, that the legitimate drama in the country was quite as respectable as the minor theatricals of that day in town; and closed with an engagement, constituting me comic actor of all work, with profits of scene-painting, two salaries, and two benefits in each town, certain of yielding some profit, however small; as, without being accountable for any expense, we were to have a certain portion of the gross receipt of each house, and were likely to have ten of these benefits yearly.

The kindness of all our Kentish friends and patrons, and the intimate terms on which we were with the manageress, soon reconciled me to the disappointment of my late ambitious views respecting the “great grand theatres” of the metropolis: besides which, we had constant invitations from most of the respectable families; our income was sufficient; and I believe this was the period of my life when, for about a year and a half, (brief portion of content!) I had little care or anxiety of any sort. There was no contingency attendant on my professional labours; I had only to be industrious to insure success; I made it the first point (let the part I had to play be good or bad) to be perfect in its words

to a letter, and then to make the most of it in the acting; and a very indifferent actor who knows his part will always appear superior to a better performer, who, from idleness, is, what we technically called “fishing for the word,” and embarrassed by the apprehension of not catching it from the prompter, when he ought, from fearless possession of the letter of his part, to be fully able to elicit the spirit of it. How many excellent actors in embryo have I seen the town ultimately deprived of, for want of due attention to a rule so simple as this *sine qua non*—necessary as courage to a soldier!—Strict attention to character, in point of dress, in a provincial theatre, will always give the actor an immense advantage; so much so, as almost to supersede talent itself, where such auxiliary aid is wanting. What the real pretensions of my wife and self were I dare not affirm; but, certainly, our unremitting attention to such points as would show to advantage the trifling ability we might possess, gave us a consideration wherever we played, which is still remembered, and which (as will be seen by future correspondence) caused some regret when we left the happy circuit. The egotism of all this will be pardoned, when I boldly add, that having some time since professed myself, as Lingo says, “a master of scholars,” I seize

every opportunity (and this is no slight one) of impressing on all my pupils, industry in a profession I always advise them *not* to embrace ; but when once adopted, they must, in spite of saints, critics, and snarlers of every sect and sort, endeavour to make their calling respectable by the undeviating propriety of their own conduct.

At Rochester our principal friend was Mr. (or, as he was always called, Doctor) Thompson, who, I believe, was eleven times mayor, and whose particular notice was a passport to the good graces of every leading family. At Maidstone, Mrs. Dibdin was patronised by Lady Hawley, of Leybourne Grange. Sir Henry, for many years after, honoured me by his correspondence and visits in London, and took an interest in our welfare, which ceased only with his days.

The late Mr. Bristow, then mayor of Canterbury ; and Mr. Baker, member for the county, —led the way in distinguishing us in the Kentish metropolis ; and when those two gentlemen subsequently favoured me with one of their oft-repeated visits in Goodge-street, and asked what theatre they should visit that evening, —I advised them to see *all* ; and had the pleasure (call it pride if you will) to join them in a drive, during

which, as my friends, they, in the course of three or four hours, passed free into the theatres of Covent-Garden, Drury-Lane, the Haymarket, Sadler's Wells, the Royal Circus, and Astley's. On the night I allude to, I had three pieces acting at Covent-Garden; "the Will for the Deed," "the Birth Day," and "Valentine and Orson." I was free of Drury with one friend, and Mr. Bannister admitted the other: I was a privileged author, and in treaty to be a proprietor of Sadler's Wells, where my brother Charles was manager. I had also the claim of being formerly author of four "of Mr. Astley's own pieces" at the Royal Amphitheatre; and with the managers of the Circus I always had *carte blanche*. If I have dwelt with any appearance of pleasure on the above little incident, the mayor and the member of parliament did also, for years after; and the latter used to tell his friends and family that every theatrical door opened to him as by enchantment in London, when he was preceded by his friend, (*credat Judæus!*) Tom Dibdin; nor do I think the Canterbury actors were afterward thought a bit the worse for it by the honourable member.

The principal acquisitions we made in the way of honourable countenance at Tunbridge Wells, arose from the special notice, first of the late

Mr. Cumberland; then of Count, now Prince Stahremberg, the Austrian ambassador, and his Countess, (who did me the honour, a whole evening, to accompany on her piano-forte, at her own house, all my songs in "the Sprite;") the Earl and Countess of Mount Edgumbe; Sir John Mackintosh; Lord Cremorne; and last, not least, his Grace the late Duke of Leeds, whose warm, friendly, and condescending patronage continued during his life.

It is not to be wondered at, if, thus encouraged, we felt our present situation preferable to what we had endured in town for the sake of a fallacious perspective; particularly as we were quite as well able to pay certain occasional substantial duties to my mother and sister, as when in London; and I am truly happy in adding, that brother Charles always liberally and affectionately joined us in the good work.

I was now leading what I thought a tolerably idle life, having only to play four nights a week; write a song about once a fortnight; paint, perhaps, three scenes in a month; attend rehearsal every day, and a lodge of masonic instruction (for I was initiated in the Lodge of St. John, Maidstone) once a week; when, all at once, those imagined metropolitan honours, good things, and distinctions I had vainly held so long in

chace, were showered upon me, without any seeking or invitation on my part.

While at Canterbury, I received an application from Mr. Lonsdale to write a piece for Sadler's Wells, to be called "the British Raft," in ridicule of the grand Gallic machine of that description which we were told was preparing to transport troops from France, for the invasion of this country: for this piece I received the old burletta price of five guineas, and the trifle (I mean the piece, not the price) was received with that *éclat* which attended every effort at loyal expression and national self-compliment, so frequently encouraged during the war;—but one song in it,—“the Snug Little Island,”—was so successful, that I sold it to Longman and Co., of Cheapside, for fifteen guineas, three times the price of the whole burletta; although a kind friend had been there before me, claimed the song, and sold it for a tenor violin. Mr. Longman afterwards told me the house cleared nine hundred pounds by this song, and begged me to consider as my own a piano-forte I had on hire; but subsequently I was given to understand that such a gift would not be sanctioned by the assignees, and the instrument was returned. On the same evening (Easter Monday, 1797) that Mr. Davis first

sang this song at Sadler's Wells, we opened the theatre at Maidstone: the Maidstone volunteers, and their commandant, Lord Romney, patronised the night's performance. Political party at that time ran very high in Maidstone; and a fierce dispute, amounting almost to a tumult, occurred, in the course of the evening, respecting an encore of "God save the King!" Lord Romney harangued the house; replies were made; when, in a low comedy frock, I was pushed on the stage by Mrs. Baker, and with much humility, between joke and earnest, begged the audience, before they proceeded in their debate, to hear my "simple song," which I instantly began, without waiting permission; and "the Snug Little Island" never was more triumphant over any division of opinion among its inhabitants. The audience had it again and again, and the rest of the night passed smoothly: its reception in London was equally enthusiastic; and to crown all, it was my introduction to his Grace of Leeds, who came every night to hear it in the ensuing Tunbridge-Wells season, and told me he had himself taught his son to sing it.

After our opening at Maidstone, I paid a short visit to my friends in town; and Mr. Downton, of Drury-Lane, (with whom I became acquainted from his being Mrs. Baker's son-in-law) drove me

back in his gig to Maidstone; and, on the road, lamented he could not get the character of a comic Jew to perform in town: he wanted one quite as benevolent, but more farcical, than Mr. Cumberland's Sheva, in which part he had made a most successful beginning of his since long and still more successful career. I told him I thought it was a style of character I should like to attempt writing, but added, I had been so unfortunate in the presentation of many dramas of every *calibre*, which had been rejected by the London patentees, that, content with my country comforts, I was determined to acquiesce in less partial opinions than my own, and make the essay no more. Mr. Dowton, however, told me, if I would write him such a part, the farce it contained should certainly be acted at Drury-Lane in a month from that time, when he, the late R. Palmer, and my old friend Sam Russell, of Eastbourne memory, were to take a benefit jointly: I therefore agreed to try the experiment, and on that day se'nnight presented Dowton with the farce of "the Jew and the Doctor." He was surprised at the expedition I had used; begged me to read him the farce; professed himself much pleased; and took it to London: and now, as of yore at Carmarthen, when watching for the first appearance of

“Shelah’s Choice,” did I daily examine the London news for “the Jew and the Doctor:” at last, I saw, for the benefit of the above-named trio, a new farce called “A Nosegay of Weeds.” My budding flowers of farcicality might be termed weeds, and justly; but still I thought the title would not suit my farce. I wrote to Dowton, who happened to come down to Maidstone next day, and very much deplored, that while he was talking to me about my farce, Mr. O’Keeffe had presented his partners with one, which they had very properly (from so established an author) accepted; and, as they could not act two new farces on that night, Dowton advised me to let him give my manuscript to Mr. Colman, who he was sure would accept it. From being pretty well inured, during the last five years, to this sort of disappointment, I thanked him, and, without expecting any happy result, or indeed caring much about it,—I commissioned him to act for me as he would for himself, which he readily undertook to do; and to the Haymarket one copy went, while I retained another. I soon saw “Throw Physic to the Dogs” advertised, and thought that might be my farce with a new title, but I was in error.

At the close of Drury-Lane season, Dowton

came down to play at Maidstone during the celebrated State Trials, when Arthur O'Connor, Quigley, and three others were arraigned for correspondence with the French revolutionary government; and as the town was full of great men of rank and literature, Dowton advised me to act the farce on my benefit night, which I did, and he played the Jew. I undertook the character of old Bromley, but had so little *heart* about the piece, (not imagining any good could ensue from a provincial performance of it,) that, quite in opposition to my usual custom, I scarcely made myself master of the words, alleging, in defence of my carelessness, that I was sure to "speak the author," say what I would. This listlessness about the matter also extended to my wife, who resigned the best part, Mrs. Changeable, to Mrs. Clifford, (now of the Norwich theatre,) while she herself chose the insignificant character of Betty. My principal anxiety was to see a great house; and it not only was what actors call a bumper, but a bumper-full of sterling good stuff, composed of the presence of Mr. (afterwards Lord Chancellor) Erskine, Mr. Sheridan, the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Suffolk, with most of the principal counsellors and noble witnesses on the State Trials,

including a gentleman I had never seen or spoken to, but who proved a very material friend on this, to me, memorable occasion.

The farce was at the opening rather heard than attended to, as little was expected from a country author; but it gained consideration by degrees, to which Downton's acting very materially contributed; and the curtain fell with that sort of decisive applause which would make a very conspicuous figure in the red-letter puff of a London play-bill. I had to sing "the Little Island" between the farce and a *petite pièce* which followed; and having been named as the author, had the honour of a more than usually hearty reception.

The State Trials were soon finished: an awful silence reigned in court while the jury were out consulting on their verdict: it was about three o'clock in the morning. I heard one countryman ask another "how he thought it would be likely to go with the prisoners?"—"They must all be hanged," was the answer of the old farmer. "Nay, but see what a power o' great people from town ha' come to gi' un a character."—"Hang 'em the sooner for that," said the farmer. It may be remembered that while Judge Buller was passing sentence on Quigley, the only prisoner found guilty, Arthur O'Connor, leaped out

of the dock, having been informed there were detainers against him. I was in court, and happened to be dressed exactly like O'Connor, who was about my height: in the tremendous tumult which followed his attempt to escape, I had all but the sleeves of my coat torn off, lost my hat and hair-ribbon, and on, at length, extricating myself from the throng, was seized by a Bow-street officer by torch-light, on presumption of my being no less a personage than Arthur himself: this I of course denied. "And *who are you then, Sir?*" demanded my captor. "Not Arthur, my friend!" cried I, full of my dramatic triumph,—"*but author, author of 'the Jew and the Doctor.'*"

CHAP. XI.

1798-1799.

“There is a tide in the affairs of men.”—*Shakspeare.*

Mr. Bicknell and Mr. Brandon—Symptoms of approaching the “great grand” theatres—Tunbridge-Wells—Mr. Cumberland—Battle of the Nile—Consequences—Duke of Leeds—More of Mrs. Baker—Her mode of reconciling a difference, and of taking care of her money—Go to town—Reading of the “Mouth of the Nile—Mr. Lewis—Incledon—Johnstone—Make an unexpected *début*—“Jew and Doctor”—Songs in “Magic Oak”—“Five Thousand a Year”—“Birth Day”—“Horse and Widow”—I play Abednego at Covent-Garden—“Tag in Tribulation”—“Sunshine after Rain”—Profits, and new arrangements at Covent-Garden—False reports—Continued kindness of former friends—Prince Stahremberg—Sir Henry and Lady Hawley—Sir William Rawlins—Mr. Holcroft—Mr. Knight of Covent-Garden—Mr. J. Johnstone—Mr. Dighton—Covent-Garden Beef-Steak Club—Mr. Const—John Emery.

THE gentleman to whom I alluded as proving himself my friend on the night of my benefit at Maidstone, was Mr. Charles Bicknell, solicitor

to the Admiralty, who much applauded my farce, had the misfortune to be robbed by highwaymen on his way to town, and, the day after that, was kind enough to do—what?—you shall know directly.

As Nancy and I were *tête-à-tête* at breakfast,

Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy,—

some of it from the French bread bakers in the High-street, a few mornings after my having appeared in the characters of old Bromley and Arthur O'Connor,—the postman (who was a great play-goer, and took three pit tickets at my benefit because I was his best customer) tapped at our street parlour-window, and delivered a letter, which we, on opening, found to contain—

“ Sir,

“ Some friends of mine were at Maidstone, and saw the new farce of ‘ The Jew and the Doctor ’ performed ; and they spoke of it in such high terms to me, that I have to-day mentioned it to Mr. Harris, who desires me to say he should be glad to see it, as it is his wish to render you any service in his power. Pray enclose the copy to me at the theatre, which will prevent its being mislaid, which Mr. H. is sorry

to find is the case with a piece you sent him some time ago.

“Yours truly,

“J. BRANDON.”

16th July, 98.

Mr. Bicknell was the friend who, as soon as he arrived in town, carried his opinion of the farce to Covent-Garden, and thus accomplished in half an hour what I had been vainly endeavouring to do for five years.

I immediately asked Dowton to get me back the copy left at the Haymarket, which he did. Mr. Colman had been out of town, and the seal of my parcel had never been broken. I transmitted the farce to Covent-Garden, and soon received the following:—

“Sir,

“Mr. Harris wishes to see you about the farce you sent me: he likes the first act, but says some alteration must be made in the second. Can you make it convenient to come to London either Saturday or Sunday, to meet him at the theatre, or Monday before twelve o'clock? After that time, he leaves town for the remainder of the week.

“Yours truly,

“J. BRANDON.”

Tuesday, 31st July, 1798.

I went to town without loss of time, visited my mother and brother Charles, and met Mr. Harris at Covent-Garden Theatre. He suggested some very proper alterations; but when I asked for the manuscript, in order to insert them, he very kindly said—"No doubt, you have another copy; and I consider this as mine on your own fair terms, for fair I dare say they will be." Mr. Harris added that he wished to bring the farce out in October; and I left town with the pleasing certainty (if aught theatrical be certain) of being allowed to make a beginning in the way I had ever aspired to.

We next went, with Mrs. Baker's company, to Tunbridge-Wells, where I a second time had the pleasure to meet Mr. Cumberland, who, having heard of my new farce, wished to peruse it, that he might see whether (from the comic hero being a Jew) I had, and in what manner, (as he termed it) "trod in his snow." When I called for the manuscript a few days afterwards, he gave it me, regretting he had not had time to read it. After I had sung "The Little Island" at Tunbridge-Wells, I had the honour of a call from the Duke of Leeds, requesting a copy; and having heard that I had a farce in embryo for Covent-Garden, his grace condescended to ask whether he might read it. Highly honoured

as I felt, I was going to put up the manuscript, in order to send it, when the Duke took it from me, put it in his pocket, and departed. The following day his grace returned it, with expressions of approbation; and Mr. Cumberland, after the duke's opinion had got abroad, being now more at leisure, also took the farce home, and returned it me with his complete approbation, provided I altered the sum fixed for the marriage portion of my heroine, which happened (for I had never seen "The Jew") to be the exact amount of the fortune Mr. C. had given the lady of his justly favourite comedy.

News soon came, by gradual, and at first unauthenticated report, of Sir Horatio Nelson's victory at the Nile. Mr. Cumberland called on me, and in the most friendly way advised me to write a piece on the subject immediately, on the presumption that the news were true; and to let Mr. Harris know the instant it was ready. I was still so incredulous as to any eventual success with my pen, that without writing one line of a piece, I sent a letter to Mr. Harris, to say I had finished a drama in one act, which I would send him, if he would accept it on the credit of what he had seen of mine: on which my wife very properly asked,—“If he *should* accept it, what will you do?”—“Write it,” was my reply;

“but until I am sure of its acceptance, I shall feel no stimulus to be at the trouble of a single line. Should Mr. Harris say, ‘I will act your piece,’ I shall be in too good spirits not to be able to write it.”

Just as my letter went off, the gazette, with a confirmation of the victory of the Nile, arrived. Mr. Harris, of course, became doubly desirous of having a piece so immediately ready, and return of post brought me the following:—

C. G. Theatre.

“Pray use all possible expedition in sending me the one-act piece you mention. My best compliments to Mr. Cumberland: I am glad you are in his favour.

“Your obedient servant,

“T. HARRIS.”

Mr. T. Dibdin, Theatre,
Tunbridge-Wells.

Delighted, alarmed, and very glad, (beautiful bathos!) that as the letter arrived on Friday, and there being no post on Saturday, I might very well take till Sunday night's post to write my piece,—I went, *con amore*, to work, finished “The Mouth of the Nile” in due time for post; divided it into several parcels, each of which

was franked by different patrons, in such overweight parcels, that the postage cost twenty-five shillings; and on Tuesday morning received Mr. Harris's reply:—

Theatre, Monday.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I think your *petite pièce* will do very well; but I must beg of you to come to us as soon as you can, for we cannot proceed a step without you; and you know how absolutely necessary it is for us to use all possible expedition.

“ Yours sincerely,

“ T. HARRIS.”

“ N.B. Pray see Mr. Lewis the moment you come to town.”

This change of style from *no* address to “ dear sir,” and from “ your obedient servant” to “ yours sincerely,” augured well; and even Mrs. Baker (though she could very ill spare me) rejoiced in this prospect of our future prosperity, as it was thought to be; and kindly gave me my benefit directly, which was honoured (through the patronage of the Duke of Leeds) with the presence of all the best company at Tunbridge-Wells; and our patronesses assured me, that in my ab-

sence, (on the cause of which they congratulated me) they would take equal care of the interests of Mrs. Dibdin.

As this departure closed all theatrical engagements between Mrs. Baker and myself, (though we shall frequently meet again in the course of this important history,) I shall here relate a circumstance which occurred at Maidstone, in consequence of the only difference of opinion respecting the business of the theatre that good lady and myself ever had.

There are sycophants in all states as well as in the government of a theatre ; and certain jealousies in the *corps de théâtre*, arising from the marked friendship ever shown us by our good manageress, had for a moment excited a coolness which ultimately led to my requesting our *congé* : this was not objected to ; and I took places in the next morning's London coach. An hour before the coach started, I waited on Mrs. Baker (who was always an early riser) for our salary, and with the intention of taking a friendly leave. I found her busy among the market-folks before her door, making hard bargains for some uncommonly fine butter just from the dairy. I announced my business, and begged to be dismissed as soon as possible. Pretending to have forgotten all that had passed, the good lady

asked what I meant ; and while, in the warmth of my recapitulating our cause of quarrel, I happened to extend my hand towards her, as on the occasion, already recorded, of our first meeting, when she clapped a Savoy leaf, containing a two-pound lump of butter, in my open palm, and said,—“ Take that home to your wife, and ask her whether she can get half so good, or half so much, for double the price in London. If you want a week’s salary (*vide* DEAL a great while ago) in advance, take it ; send away the coachman ; and don’t talk nonsense about going to town. The mayor, and all the ‘great grand’ quality, are coming to-night, and can’t do without the ‘Snug Little Island.’ What do you write such things for ? You are more trouble to me than all my actors.”

No individual ever persevered more industriously or more successfully in getting money than Mrs. Baker, who, as fast as she realized cash, laid it out in purchasing or building the several theatres she died possessed of. When by her laudable exertions she had become sole proprietress of the Canterbury, Rochester, Maidstone, Tunbridge-Wells, and Feversham theatres, (the first four have each an attached dwelling-house well furnished, and its own particular stock of standing scenery ; the latter, a slight edifice, built at Margate, and removed to

Feversham, in consequence of Mrs. B.'s being excluded by the Margate patent,) she began to be at a loss how to dispose of her increasing savings. Well versed as she was in the art of fairly acquiring money, she knew so little what to do with her honest gains, when she had obtained them, that, after vesting sums in country banks, and in the hands of respectable tradesmen at perhaps 3 per cent, and in some cases at no per cent at all, but with a view to its being safer than in her own hands,—she still retained considerable sums in *rouleaux* in her house and about her person. Incredible as it may appear, she had an insurmountable distrust of the Bank of England, and could never be brought to comprehend why her money would be safer and more productive there than elsewhere. At last, in consequence of some trifling losses, (incurred through her keeping so many little spice-boxes full of guineas in her own custody,) she began to listen to advice; and, by request of her nearest relations, my wife and self joined in entreating her to buy stock. I recommended a highly-respectable stock-broker, Mr. Millington, who was and is a most intimate friend of her son-in-law Downton; and among the first money she commissioned me to pay into his hands, (at a time when gold was gold) were seven hundred guineas, (guineas were often sold at 1*l.* 7*s.* each

in that day) a gold Jacobus, several foreign coins, and a Bank-of-England note for two hundred pounds,—which last, from its being in her eye a rarity, she had literally kept in her pocket above seven years, and parted with it as reluctantly as if she was never to see its value again. It was vain trying to convince her that had she bought stock with it when it first came into her possession, it would have been now worth three hundred instead of two : she conceived she had acted like a heroine in parting with it at all : her opinion, however, gradually altered ; and we had the pleasure of a half-yearly visit from her in town, when she came, not to take away, but to add to her dividends the very comfortable profits she still continued to realize.

It escaped my memory, in my first notice of Mrs. Baker's *corps*, to mention an extraordinarily pompous actor, but thoroughly good-natured man, in her company, of the name of Newton ; or (as he was styled from his affected precision in speaking every syllable distinctly) “ Mister New-*Ton*.” One night, at Tunbridge-Wells, an infant in the pit cried so loud as to render it impossible for the performers to be heard ; when Mr. New-*Ton*, quite indignant at being interrupted, gravely took off his hat, and with great solemnity thus addressed the astonished matron :—

“Ma-dam, I assure you, upon the veracity of a man and a *gentle*-man, that unless you instantly adopt some method of keeping the play quiet, it will be morally impossible for the child to proceed.” The mistake set the house in a roar of laughter, which frightened the unhappy infant into a scream

so loud and dread,—

that the disappointed mother was of necessity obliged to retire with her offspring, and resign the expected pleasure of the evening. Mrs. Baker very handsomely returned the lady's money, saying, at the same time, in her hurried manner,—“Foolish woman! foolish woman! don't come another night till half-price, and then give the poor baby some Dalby's Carminative.”

I remember one very crowded night, patronised by a royal duke at Tunbridge-Wells, when Mrs. Baker was taking money for three doors at once,—her anxiety, and very proper tact, led her, while receiving cash from one customer, to keep an eye in perspective on the next, to save time; as thus :—“Little girl! get your money all ready while this gentleman pays.—My lord! I'm sure your lordship has silver; and let that little boy go in while I give his lordship change.—Shan't count after your ladyship.—Here

comes the duke ! make haste ! His Royal Highness will please to get his ticket ready while my lady—now, sir ! now, your Royal Highness !”—“ O dear, Mrs. Baker ! I’ve left my ticket in another coat-pocket.”—“ To be sure you have ! take your Royal Highness’s word : let his Royal Highness pass : his Royal Highness has left his ticket in his *other* coat pocket.” *Eclats de rire* followed ; and I believe the rank and fashion of the evening found more entertainment in the lobby than from the stage.

But now to affairs of moment—to me, reader ! at least. In obedience to Mr. Harris’s wish, I waited on Mr. Lewis the instant I arrived in town, and he appointed the following day for my reading my piece in the green-room. The anticipation of this necessary preliminary made me nervous in the extreme. Before the first nobility and gentry at Tunbridge-Wells I could read, or speak, or sing, without the slightest embarrassment, for there all I did was right ; but the ACTORS of the Theatre-Royal Covent-Garden were to me a much more formidable auditory ; especially as at the reading of all new pieces, performers very frequently measure the merit of the proposed drama by the value of their own individual parts in it ; and, without meaning any offence to professors whose talents

have laid me under so many years of obligation, —I can assert, that I have heard opinions of a play given on the staircase while the actors were descending from the reading-room, so totally opposite to each other,—that until, by after experience, I discovered the cause, I hardly knew how to believe that men of education and merit could be so much at variance on a subject they ought to be, and were generally, pretty equal judges of.

The dreaded morning at length came ; and, nearly a stranger to all, I found myself seated among Messrs. Fawcett, Incledon, J. Johnstone, Townsend, Simmons, Miss Walcup, Miss Sims, Mr. Attwood, (who was to compose the new music,) Mr. Farley, (who was to superintend the melo-dramatic part of the bagatelle,) and Mr. Lewis, the kindest, most gentlemanly, and cleverest stage-manager

My little life hath known.

I observed, as many a terrified candidate for the bays had done before and since, on similar occasions, “ This is an awful moment, gentlemen !”

Mr. Fawcett. — Very ; but you are among friends.

Mr. Lewis. — You are just at the edge of a cold

bath ; plunge in over-head, without fear, and in one moment you will find it quite pleasant.

Thus encouraged, I read “with good emphasis and good discretion ;” and as I had adapted the principal comic songs to known airs, I sang them as they occurred. Fawcett seemed much pleased ; Incledon observed, no man could write a song like my father ; and when I had finished, each, in tolerable good-humour, except one, took the part allotted, and said “ Good morning !” The part which remained on the table was an Irishman, in which were two songs. Mr. Johnstone had walked out with Mr. Lewis, the latter desiring me to wait his return ; pending which, Incledon re-entered the room, and said, without stopping for breath,—“ My dear lad ! that you possess some talent, no man that *is* a man—of judgment can deny : I adore your father ; and, my dear boy ! you have got the mark of the beast on you, as well as he has. Then why, my dear Tom Dibdin ! (I love the name ; for, in short, it is a name—that *is* a name) though your father is abused by many a composer who is no brick-maker himself, (but his ‘ Lads of the Village’ will live longer than you or I, my boy !) and that makes me ask you—you, who have heard me sing ‘ Black-eyed Susan’ and the ‘ Storm,’—the ‘ Storm,’ my boy !—how you

could think of writing me such a d—d diabolical part as this? not but what I'll do it from respect to Tommy Harris, and yourself, and your father's talent; and because I'm sure you can never have heard me open 'the Messiah,' or sing 'Old Towler.' Come to-night, and listen, and then you'll know how to do the next better; but now Jack Fawcett has got the best songs here—and the thing will do d—d well; so keep up your spirits, and I'll get Jack Davy and Billy Shields to compose something for you shall be worth writing to."

This was uttered with rapidity, and all that rich eccentricity of manner, which many have imitated, and few have equalled. His exit prevented my reply; and really I felt so awkwardly, and so uncertain whether I ought to laugh or take offence, that I hardly was conscious of the re-entrance of Mr. Lewis, who announced his regret that Mr. Johnstone could not be prevailed on to play in the piece; and as there was no other actor in the theatre, who stood prominent in Irish characters, Mr. Lewis advised me, from having heard me read it, to attempt the part myself; to which (fearful of not getting my piece acted at all) I reluctantly consented.

The next day Mr. Harris sent for me, and observed that, as a one-act piece, "the Mouth of

the Nile" would do little for the theatre in case of success ; and begged I would make a preceding act of pantomimic story, founded on some incident supposed to have taken place on the banks of the Nile previous to Nelson's arrival. This did not at all meet my ideas : the value of the trifle we were rehearsing was to arise entirely from its immediate production, while all ranks were enthusiastically delighted with every thing and any thing that could be said in praise of our navy ; and now to have to write a new act, and wait for more scenery and rehearsals, was to me a complete omen of failure. I fancied I saw my air-built castles once more in the dust, and regretted leaving my humble but happy rustic pre-eminence among the good-natured Kentish critics : I was, however, persuaded, though not convinced ; Mr. Harris throwing in the *argumentum ad hominem*, that a two-act piece would be hereafter valued by his treasurer at twice the price of the present single act, I, therefore, went to my lodgings, and set to work afresh : I had an appointment to dine with my friends the Powells ; and manfully resisted the charms of the bottle, the dessert, and the ladies, to depart for home early, with intention to fag at my first act all the evening. Passing the theatre, where my wife's letters from Tunbridge-Wells were to

be addressed, and just looking into the hall, (determined not to go behind the scenes lest I should be detained from my task,) I found a letter for me; and while reading it at the door, Mr. Lewis came out of the theatre in evident agitation, exclaiming “What shall we do?” The instant I turned round toward him, he said, “Ah, my dear fellow! you perhaps may be of the greatest service to us: you read your piece with devilish good effect, and gave it a sort of—in short, you convinced me, that, if you would but try, you would play *Old Pickle* in the “SPOILED CHILD” to a wonder.”—“Me, sir? I play *Old Pickle*? where and when?”—“Here, and to-night, and you must make haste too, for the play is half over. Mr. Sparks Powell (who died next morning) is taken dangerously ill: we can’t find Emery, and you are the very man: the book, the dress, and all, are ready, and ——”—“But, sir! I must go home, and proceed with the first act of the new piece!”—“D—n the new piece!” cried Mr. Lewis; (“all in good time,” thought I) “you are too good-natured not to come to our assistance, and Mr. Harris will be eternally obliged to you.”

I had seen the farce in question the very night before, and often played another part in it in the country; so permitted myself to be almost carried, rather than led, to poor Powell’s dressing-

place, and in less than an hour and a half was seated at a supper-table before the audience of the “great grand” Covent-Garden Theatre, and helping Mrs. Davenport to the wing of a supposed poll-parrot.

Mr. Murray had prepared the house by an apology, stating the dangerous case of Mr. Sparks Powell, and adding, “that a young gentleman, who would hereafter be better known to them, had undertaken the part, for this *simple* reason,—that the audience should not be disappointed.” Mark Lonsdale, and several friends in the house, came round, full of astonishment, when I had finished the part, and overwhelmed me with congratulation. The public, and the next day’s press, were liberally kind in their reception and mention of my attempt; and when Mrs. W. Powell (with whom I next morning breakfasted, and who had not heard of my forced *début*) read the following paragraph in the Herald, she considered it to be a hoax:—“Last night, in consequence of the sudden indisposition of Mr. Sparks Powell, Mr. T. Dibdin (said to be author of the forthcoming piece in celebration of our late victory, and who happened accidentally to be in the theatre) undertook, at an hour’s notice, the character of Old Pickle, in the farce of the “Spoiled Child,” which he played with much

humour and discrimination, and was highly applauded." I finished my new first act by one o'clock next day, and read it to Mr. Harris, who approved it; and for my last night's service, and what I was going to attempt in the new piece, put me, as an actor, on a salary of five pounds per week.

The next evening their Majesties honoured the theatre with their presence, and I attended to see a night rehearsal of the scenery, shipping, and materials for the Battle of the Nile, which was to take place after the farce. Several noblemen in His Majesty's suite, were behind the scenes; and I saw the Duke of Leeds in earnest conversation with Mr. Munden and others. Highly honoured as I had been by his grace's notice at Tunbridge-Wells, I did not know how far it might be *etiquette* for summer patronage at a watering-place to be presumed on in London in the winter, and therefore did not think myself warranted in appearing to see the duke; but the instant he saw *me*, he quitted the party he had been talking to, came across the stage, shook me heartily by the hand, and introduced me, as his *protégé*, to the gentlemen near; complimented me on my having played Old Pickle; asked me to lend him once more the manuscript of "the Jew and the Doctor," which he wished much to peruse

again, before it appeared publicly : during the subsequent night rehearsal of the scenery, Mr. Lewis told me, the duke had called him and Mr. Harris aside, and recommended me to them as a young man for whom he felt a very strong interest : this was doubly generous, as his grace never hinted his intention to me.

The new first act of "the Mouth of the Nile," being quite finished and sufficiently rehearsed, both acts made their appearance before the audience ; and, as my fears had truly prophesied, one act had no sooner come out than it went in again : all that part of the piece which I had originally written by return of post from Tunbridge-Wells was very successful, and repeated thirty-two nights that season, and several times during the year following. Mr. Cobb's opera of "Ramah Droog" was soon after produced with much *éclat*, and "the Jew and the Doctor" put into immediate rehearsal as a future accompaniment to the favourite opera.

I was less alarmed at reading this piece to the performers, from my having become more personally acquainted with them, and from having acquired some approach to consideration by the success of my first attempts as author and actor. Mr. Harris and Mr. Lewis had also given me a

sort of reflected respectability from their constant and kind notice of me; and his grace of Leeds seemed to make a point of coming from his box to speak to me every time he visited the theatre; as well as calling in at rehearsal, and taking me with him in his morning walks. I had read the part of the Jew to Mr. Fawcett, by Mr. Harris's desire, the day previous to the public reading; and the former gentleman expressing himself quite satisfied with his part, begged to be excused from attending on the following day, when all applauded the farce heartily. Mrs. Mattocks (who I much feared would refuse the part of Mrs. Changeable) seemed in high spirits, laughed more than all the rest, said it was the best attempt since Mrs. Inchbald's comedy of "the Midnight Hour," wished her part was longer, and, on my offering to write an epilogue by way of make-weight, appeared perfectly satisfied. Mr. Knight made some scruples about Changeable, but Mr. Lewis, by some means, put him into better humour. John Emery and Charles Farley received with the greatest good-nature the trifling characters of Old Bromley and William; and one lady, whom I had known from a child, moved with graceful dignity out of the room, leaving the part of Emily on the

table. As I had not arranged the parts myself, and was therefore unconscious of any intention to offend, I did not feel much at the secession, though I certainly conceived myself highly favoured and obliged by the very ready and lady-like manner in which Miss Mansell (now Mrs. Reynolds) consented to play the rejected Emily. I wrote two epilogues for Mrs. Mattocks, neither of which pleased her; and Mr. Lewis persuaded her to have no epilogue at all.

Within a few days of the farce appearing, Mr. Harris, just as he was leaving town, begged (from his anxiety for the safety of the piece) that I would add something more for Mrs. Mattocks in the chamber-scene, or at least in the last scene, which I promised to do: but after working at it twenty-four hours, I found that whatever any other author might have done, I could make no improvement; and went in despair to Mr. Lewis, to ask what I should say to Mr. Harris on his return. "Say? say nothing," replied Mr. Lewis: "Mr. Harris is too much your friend to wish to give you unnecessary trouble: he has so much just now to think of, that ten to one, if, at next rehearsal, he does not go away before the last scene comes on: but should he stop, and make any objection, I'll undertake your excuse."

I did not feel comfortable, notwithstanding ; Mr. Harris's kindness being such, I wished to attend to his wishes, even when they were against my own. He came to the next rehearsal ; stayed till the last moment ; and when the farce was finished, clapped me on the back, and said, " Very well ! well done, my boy ! you have done it now just as I wished : quite another thing ! " and away he went, Mr. Lewis looking at me with his archly-arched eye-brows over his shoulder, as he followed his principal. Should any one be surprised that this lapse of memory could occur to so consummate and experienced a judge as Mr. Harris, they will please to observe that this was the first stage rehearsal of the farce Mr. H. had been present at : he had heretofore only seen so many simple words upon paper ; and it may easily be conceived what the fillings-up, in acting, of an Emery, Fawcett, Mattocks, Knight, and others would effect. I took it for an undeniable omen in favour of my venture, the success of which, on the fifteenth night of " Ramah Droog," fully justified the verdict given on its first trial at the Maidstone assizes.

The Morning Post mentioned a closet audience granted by His Majesty to the Duke of Leeds, who publicly and laughingly informed me, in the green-room, that he had asked it entirely for an

opportunity of soliciting the king to command a representation of my farce on His Majesty's next visit to the theatre,—which honour was, in consequence, bestowed on it.

I was now requested to write the recitatives, songs, &c. for Mr. Farley's forthcoming Christmas pantomime of the "Magic Oak," as also for the operatic after-piece of "Albert and Adelaide." Miss Plumptree sent me a literal translation from the German, from which I produced the one-act farce of "the Horse and Widow." Gratitude for the attentions I had received from Mr. Lewis prompted me to attempt a new comedy for his benefit, which I did, in three acts, under the title of "Five Thousand a Year,"—which he did me the kindness to say brought him the best house he ever had at Covent-Garden: it was well received, acted several nights, and was honoured by their Majesties' command. I had no claim on the theatre for it, as it came out on a benefit-night, but sold the copy-right to Messrs. Robinsons, of Paternoster-row, for sixty guineas. I had scarcely taken breath, when Mr. Harris sent me Kotzebue's German play of "Reconciliation," from which I wrote the comedy of "the Birth-Day:" both these pieces were as well received as my best hopes could have aspired to.

During the run of "the Jew and the Doctor," Mr. Lewis came to me about an hour before its commencement one evening, to entreat I would play the part of Abednego, Mr. Fawcett being, from sudden indisposition, totally unable to undertake it. Mr. Murray made another apology as to the *simplicity* of my reasons for attempting this rather arduous essay, in which I had the good fortune (on that and the succeeding evening) to be so far successful, that the next day's critique expressed surprise at my not having undertaken the part *ab initio*. Mr. Harris, after this, wished me to play Count Sans-Château, in my farce of "the Horse and Widow;" but I now begged to decline acting altogether, as my time seemed likely to be completely occupied in a pleasanter way. My five pounds per week were to be continued the year round, for the yearly production of a pantomime and a one-act piece upon any local or temporary subject, arising, like "the Mouth of the Nile," from circumstances of public interest: but the pieces I had already produced were to be included in said five pounds per week, with an additional two hundred pounds for copyright of the "Birth-Day" and "Jew and Doctor:" the profits, therefore, of my first season's engagement stood thus:—

Salary from October till the close of the theatre, about	£.	s.
	170	0
For the two above-named copy-rights retained by the theatre	200	0
Copy-right of "Horse and Widow," sold to Mr. Barker	20	0
Ditto of "Five Thousand a Year," sold to Messrs. Robinson & Co.	60	0
Ditto songs in pantomime, to Barker	6	6
Ditto "Mouth of the Nile," to Barker	10	0
	£466	6

My farce of "Sunshine after Rain" was acted for Mr. Munden's benefit; and I wrote a new one-act piece, called "Tag in Tribulation," for the benefit of Mr. Knight.

We again invited my mother to reside with us; and on her declining, we had the pleasure of increasing our subscription to her comforts to one hundred per annum, and had also the happiness of adding fifteen pounds a year to the income of my aged grandmother, Mrs. Pitt, which, I regret to say, she did not live long to receive.

The engagement I have mentioned lasted seven years, before an addition of one pound per week was made to it. So little is mere report in a theatre to be depended on, that it was currently believed I had fourteen pounds per

week, for which I was to write four dramas yearly. Mr. Horn (now of Drury-Lane Theatre) laid a considerable wager,—a dinner for a large party,—with Mr. Benjamin Thomson, the translator of the German Theatre, that the latter presumed part of the engagement was fact; and, on his losing the bet, a very splendid dinner we had, attended by about eighteen of the first theatrical gentlemen from both theatres.

The newspapers were, in general, so convinced of my presumption in having undertaken to supply the theatre in the way mentioned, that I felt obliged to send them a circular, which was inserted generally with expressions of their approbation:—

To the Editor of, &c.

“ Sir,

“ It having been erroneously and unwarrantably asserted in the public prints that I have contracted to furnish Covent-Garden Theatre with four pieces each season, I respectfully take the liberty of stating, that no such agreement was ever made; the proprietors having never determined on adopting any production of mine till first read and approved, except in the instance of a new pantomime, which they rely on my endeavours to prepare for Christmas.”

The pieces produced this season (1798) at Covent-Garden by other authors were very numerous, comprising "Lovers' Vows," a comedy in five acts, by Mrs. Inchbald; "A Day in Rome," a farce acted one night; "Ramah Droog," a three-act opera, by Mr. Cobb; "Laugh when you Can," a comedy in five acts, by Mr. Reynolds; "Albert and Adelaide," a romantic two-act opera; "the Votary of Wealth," a comedy by Mr. Holman, in five acts; "the Magic Oak, or Harlequin Woodcutter;" "What is She?" a comedy, in five acts; and "the Old Clothesman," a farce by Mr. Holcroft, given to *me* by the newspapers; and, what is extraordinary, Mr. Brandon told me the proprietors would be obliged by my not contradicting the report. This I could not promise, having already disclaimed it; not out of disrespect, but from a wish not to injure the production by a name, which had already been too frequently before the public for the short space of one season.

But the most brilliant addition to the attractive powers of Covent-Garden this season was the engagement of the late John Emery, whose name is its own eulogy: Miss Waters, Miss Mitchell, and Mrs. Chapman, all came out in "Ramah Droog," and, as well as poor Emery, are also all dead.

His late Majesty honoured the “ Birth-Day ” several times with a command. As he left the theatre after his first seeing it, the king was pleased to observe to Mr. Harris, that the ship mentioned as having been carved by the captain on the door of the disputed garden, ought to be introduced to the eye of the audience : this was afterwards done, accompanied by a just compliment to our navy, which obtained three rounds of applause ; and on His Majesty’s next visit, he smiled at the ship, pointed it out to the queen, and was the first to commence, in a most decided manner, the tokens of general approbation which again and again followed the speech alluding to it. It was on one of these visits that while Mr. Harris was lighting His Majesty from his box, the king, not perceiving some steps in the lobby before him, had nearly fallen ; but quickly recovering himself, said laughingly to the alarmed proprietor, “ Slippery times, Harris ! slippery times ; we must look to our feet : ” the period when this happened made the remark peculiarly *d-propos* ; a white cloth was, on subsequent occasions, laid on the steps to prevent a recurrence of the accident.

Nothing, at this time, gave me much greater pleasure than the very frequent proofs I daily met with, that my friends in the country took a decided interest in all that befel me : every post

brought me the kindest congratulations; and even the patrons of high rank, who had distinguished me at Tunbridge-Wells, did not forget to call or write, to express their interest in my prospects. The present Prince Stahremberg to whom I inscribed one of my productions, was among the first; and I had reason to be proud of what he condescended to write me:—

“ Sir,

“ I have had no earlier opportunity of returning my thanks for your polite attention. If the warmest interest for your success is taken into consideration, nobody could better than myself lay claim to your remembrance. I have been, since I knew you at Tunbridge-Wells, a constant witness of the well-deserved applause and encouragement your efforts and talents met with from a public, with whom it was always pleasing to me to join in favour of Mr. Dibdin. Having some time ago read a German play which seemed to me interesting, I translated it into English during my moments of leisure; and this now I offer to you, begging you would consider it as your own property, in case you judge that you can make it acceptable to the public. You may alter the whole as you think proper, so as to further the success of your play for your own

interest. Should you not accept it, I only desire you to return me my manuscript.

“ I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

“ L. C. STAHRMBERG.”

Twickenham, October 20, 1799.

The German play I presented to Mr. Harris, who did not think it could be adapted to the English stage with any prospect of success; I therefore respectfully returned it to his excellency.

Sir Henry and Lady Hawley, of Leybourne Grange, near Maidstone, were pleased to express the most friendly solicitude for our welfare; and Sir Henry was kind enough, at my request, to transfer his patronage at Maidstone to Mr. and Mrs. Clifford, a very deserving couple, at present of the Norwich theatre.

I now thought it my duty to wait on Sir William Rawlins, who told me he was just thinking of coming to look for me. The penalty of my indenture was one hundred pounds; I offered fifty. After some argument, Sir William said,—“ Make it what your uncle calls gentleman’s money, *i. e.* guineas, and I’ll take it.” I paid the fifty guineas, and, *me voilà!* legally free from my civic bond. Sir William handsomely offered, at any time, should I be inclined to take up my

freedom of the city, to accompany me to Guildhall, and testify that I had honourably cancelled all his claims on me. Soon after this, I made application to Mr. Harris to engage Mrs. Dibdin, which, on moderate terms, he readily acceded to; and our joint salary, while the theatre was open, became eight pounds per week; mine, of five pounds weekly, remaining, as before agreed on, through the summer.

About this period, as I was walking with Mr. T. Knight, of Covent-Garden Theatre, who married the Countess of Derby's sister, and is since dead, he introduced me to the late Mr. Holcroft, with whom, *sans adieu*, and rather to my surprise, he almost immediately left me: this was in Hyde Park, which was very full of company. Mr. Holcroft said many kind things of my farces; but, what was infinitely more grateful to me, asked much about my mother, of whom he expressed himself with great warmth of regard, adding, that in his younger days, she was the woman of all others he had wished to marry: he also mentioned having had many rather strong controversial arguments with my brother Charles on the subject of theology. I told him I had heard Charles mention this; that I was well assured of my brother's sincerity, and ability to maintain his opinion, which was on the right

side of the question; and that I should be very happy, though a very indifferent disputant, to take up the subject where it had been left off. Mr. Holcroft laughed, but said, if ever we disputed, it ought to be who could (as brother dramatists) best serve the other. I never saw Mr. Holcroft's Memoirs till lately, when I found in that part containing his journal, his own notice of the above conversation:—"1799, Jan. 26th, met Knight, who is to play Florid in the 'Old Clothesman,' and who wanted to tell it me as a secret, which I refused to hear: T. Dibdin, comedian, and author of 'the Jew and the Doctor,' was with him. I like him because he spoke so earnestly in praise of the virtuous principles of his brother: I invited the young man to my house."

Mr. Holcroft also says in his notice of December 26th: "Went to 'the Jew and Doctor,' which is a tolerably good farce." I subsequently had frequent visits from Mr. Holcroft; and was always as much delighted with his very improving conversation, as with the great good-will he continued to manifest towards my connexions and myself.

I have said that Mr. Knight suddenly left me, after introducing me to Mr. Holcroft; which, on our next meeting, Mr. Knight attributed to a

dislike he had to be seen publicly with any known political character, he himself being of no party. I laughingly thanked him for leaving me in the situation he thought so dangerous for himself, adding, that Mr. Holcroft had spoken of any thing but politics; and I can affirm, that from that time, I never, in any of the numerous parties where I subsequently had the advantage of meeting him, heard him make even an allusion to any thing connected with a political subject.

After I had produced the interlude of "Tag in Tribulation" for Mr. Knight's benefit, I saw his name mentioned as the author in several publications, but did not at the time notice it. When, at Mr. Knight's particular solicitation, I, in the year 1804, wrote the address which he spoke on quitting the stage, and saw that address, with much laudatory comment, also attributed to the very clever pen of Mr. Knight himself,—my young authorship felt offended, and I wrote very candidly what I felt, perhaps more at length (as I may be doing now) than so trivial a matter might seem to require; but having announced myself as author of my own attempts to all my friends, I stood in rather an awkward situation both with them and the public unless the matter were put right. Mr. Knight's letter

was rather long: omitting, therefore, much complimentary matter about “splendid talent,” “goodness of heart,” and “friendly,” &c. the following is the most material part of it:—

“I cannot but feel extremely sorry to receive from you a note evidently written under the influence of displeasure, and think it a duty I owe your former kindness, (however severely I have felt the sentiments of your note,) to declare I have not, first or last, entertained the slightest intention of giving you the smallest offence. As to the address, it is too trifling for either of us to contend for its authorship: (this was complimentary!) I allow myself wrong in having applied to you in the first instance; for it was a task the person himself, with only a tithe of comparative ability, would perhaps best do; but it was my knowledge of your extreme readiness, and of your disposition to oblige, that thus far led me to place you in so awkward a predicament, and led me, without ceremony, to omit, alter, or adopt any part of what you so very kindly did for me. Had I used more, I should have entreated you not to have published the address with your name; knowing, first, your reputation does not need such a prop; and that it reads awkward, that *another* should have ex-

pressed for *one* what one's own grateful heart to the public is supposed to have done. With respect to 'Tag in Tribulation,' your benevolent spirit will not, I am sure, do me such wrong, as to suppose I was ever privy to its being announced in any publication as mine," &c. &c.

This letter (in some places rather obscure), of which I have not inserted more than a third, is a much longer reply than one I received on a subject rather similar some years after from Dublin. I had written a comic address, in the form of an Irish song, for Mr. John Johnstone to introduce himself on his first appearance almost since boyhood to his Dublin friends, and it had the honour to be very favourably received.

One morning the late Mr. Hughes, treasurer of Covent-Garden Theatre, showed me, as a great curiosity, a large play-bill from Dublin, announcing morning performances, on account of a partial insurrection or rebellion, at which time the barbarous murder of Lord Kilwarden had just been perpetrated: in this bill the aforesaid musical address was announced as written expressly for Mr. Johnstone by his friend George Colman, Esq. I prevailed on Mr. Hughes to give me the play-bill, in which I corrected the erroneous passage, and enclosed it per post, weighing more

than an ounce, to Mr. Johnstone, at Dublin; merely saying, in the envelope, that the *printer* having committed an error, I was sure my friend Johnstone would be obliged to me for having pointed it out. Very few words formed the merry explanatory return, the principal line of which was

Pull up your breeches, and be good-natured!!

While I was playing at Maidstone, Mr. Dighton addressed a request that I would write him rather a long song to sing to his brother volunteers on the King's birth-day, which he got by return of post, and which, he wrote me word back, was enthusiastically encored. When I came to town soon after, I saw my song in Fentum's music-shop, printed with a flaming title, and a "great grand" volunteer engraved at its head, as "written and sung with unbounded applause by Brother Robert Dighton." A similar circumstance I hinted at respecting the "Snug Little Island:" and it is not a twelve-month since I saw my farce, called "Of Age Tomorrow," neatly printed and published, without my knowing a word of it; and it had been on sale for more than twenty years. The bookseller had lately bought it of another bookseller, who had bought it of an individual who had no right to

sell it. The justice of my protest was instantly admitted ; and before I left the shop, I received a much more sterling apology than either I.'s or K.'s in the shape of five and twenty sovereigns.

It is certainly rather flattering when the authorship of one's attempts is either claimed by or attributed to cleverer men than oneself. I have often been highly pleased, when in a stage coach, or a coffee-room, I have been told my opera of " the Cabinet " was the very best of my father's dramatic productions ; and felt no small complacency, one evening, at the Literary Fund Club, of which I had the honour many years to be a member,—when after Charles Incledon had given with great effect my ballad of " May we ne'er want a friend or a bottle to give him ! "—an elderly gentleman, who ranked among what the John Bull is so fond of designating the " best society,"—whispered in my ear,—“ Ah, my dear sir ! these are the true things of the old school : what a pity it is no one living is found to write such ditties now ! ”

I have to close this portion of my story with a most unfortunate incident to me, and to every thing in perspective that regarded my future welfare ; to others the loss must have been incalculable :—I allude to the demise of my patron, the Duke of Leeds. I shall not take up

the reader's time in enumerating instances of condescension and personal proofs of friendship, the memory of which will go down to the grave with the writer of this *mélange*. His grace had granted my wish of dedicating the "Jew and Doctor" to him; but his death preceding the publication of that farce, it was thus inscribed:—"To the memory of the late Duke of Leeds, to whom, by his permission, it would have been dedicated had he lived,—this dramatic attempt is inscribed, with sentiments of most respectful gratitude, by the author."

I had not been long attached to Covent-Garden Theatre before I was elected member of (don't be alarmed, reader!) the Covent-Garden Theatrical Beef-Steak Club;—why so called, I don't know, as we never used to eat beef-steaks there;—at least, I never saw one on the table. It was a most agreeable society, consisting of the principal actors, and every dramatic author, connected with Covent-Garden Theatre, as well as several eminent commercial and legal characters. Among the latter, no one brought more gentlemanly conviviality to the club than Mr. Const, the present respected chairman of the Westminster sessions, and certainly one of the best chairmen at a merry meeting I ever had the honour of obeying. To keep con-

versation general, it was the custom, in this society, after two or three usual toasts, to call upon one gentleman for the name of a public performer, and on another for the title of a dramatic work or quotation to correspond; as thus:—the president gave “Charles Incledon,” and Mr. Const added

Gratiano talks an infinite deal of nothing;

or another proposed “George Cooke,” to which name Mr. John Johnstone, with a richly-acted brogue, exclaimed, “a load o’ whiskey” (Lodiska). Mr. Emery, who was introduced to this joyous assembly the same day with myself, and who was reckoned (with myself, of course) a very diffident man,—was at first much annoyed by these quotations, which, to produce greater effect, were to be given as instantaneously as possible on the name being announced, with which they were to correspond. When, on the first day, it came to Emery’s turn to make a quotation, he declared that (although an actor) he never could extemporaneously think of an apt extract from a play, nor had he ever made one on any subject. On being pressed, however, without any apparent consciousness of its just applicability to himself, he said—

Indeed, indeed, sirs! but this troubles me.

CHAP. XII.

1799—1800.

“ A simple coming-in for one man.”

Second campaign at Covent-Garden — *Début* of Mrs. Dibdin—Mr. Moody—Sheridan the elder—Garrick—Henderson—“ Naval Pillar”—Mrs. Inchbald—“ The Volcano ”—Fate of “ True Friends ”—“ St. David’s Day ”—“ Liberal Opinions ”—Mrs. Mattocks—Mr. Quick—Royal patronage—How to write for half-price—Mr. Cumberland again—Proceeds of the season—Trip to Nottingham—Play for brother Cecil—Nottingham hospitality, with exception of two brutes—Brother Cecil’s poetry.

COVENT-GARDEN re-opened September 16th, 1799, with an occasional address, which I had written at the request of Mr. Harris, and which was spoken with applause by Mr. Pope during the first three nights of the season. On the 18th, my wife made her first appearance in the character of Aura, in the comedy of “ the Farm-House : ” her reception secured her an engagement, which lasted ten years, and then only terminated at her own request ; during which time I may be permitted to say, (all I mean to

say respecting her pretensions as an actress) that, besides fulfilling her duties, during that period, at Covent-Garden, she was sent for to Drury-Lane as a substitute for Miss Pope in the character of Clementina Allspice; performed, on the sudden indisposition of Mrs. Siddons, her part of Millwood at Covent-Garden; and, on the last night of Mr. Moody's ever appearing on the stage, Mrs. Jordan having been suddenly taken ill, Mrs. Dibdin was solicited, and obtained leave from Covent-Garden to play Nell in the "Devil to Pay." The veteran Moody expressed himself highly pleased with her performing, and, with great good-humour, begged her to preserve, in memory of him, the cap in which, for the last time, he had acted Jobson.

A short time prior to his death, I had the good fortune to meet Mr. Moody, whom I had known in my youth, in a Richmond stage; and on our way to town, re-introduced myself to his recollection, for I had outlived his knowledge: he seemed much pleased with the encounter; told me he was in the next room to me when I was born; and begged I would give my mother (who, he said, was a very great favourite of his) an apple he had in his hand, as an humble but affectionate token from a sincere friend, whom he regretted he had not seen for many,

many years. I, with great pleasure, put the apple in my pocket : meantime, our conversation about old times and old actors grew animated, and I think a little interesting to a rather intelligent party, who were our fellow-passengers in the long stage. In the midst of some pleasant story Mr. Moody was telling with singular glee, I very inadvertently took the apple from my pocket, without recollecting or attending to any thing but Moody's excellent humour ; eat the fruit, and thought no more about it, until, when arrived at the White Horse Cellar, the venerable Hibernian took leave of me, for the last time in this world, with the following words, uttered with a benevolent look, a smile, and a rich, though half-assumed brogue, which reminded me much of the full-toned humour of the late Rev. Father O'Leary :—" Young man !" ejaculated Moody, " may God bless you as I do ! and may he bless the good soul that bore ye ! Present her the kind love and remembrance of a true friend : tell her, I am happy to see she has instilled good notions into the head of her son, and tell her to offer him one precept more,—which is, whenever an apple is given him in trust for his mamma, never to forget his duty so far as to eat it himself." So saying, he retired, amid, literally, the plaudits of the party ; and, notwithstanding

the solemnity of so grave a charge, I could not help joining very heartily in the laugh he raised against me.

Besides Moody's cap, I have a relic of another renowned actor,—namely, the late Mr. Sheridan's father, who gave it Mr. Macklin, who presented it to my grandmother Mrs. Pitt:—it is the crutch-headed cane which Mr. Sheridan used, when performing *Lear*, *Cato*, *Lusignan*, &c. &c. On showing this vestige of the old school to Mr. Const, (who, I imagine, I may take the liberty of designating as an old friend,) Mr. C. told me an anecdote of the elder Sheridan, I believe not generally known. During the latter part of his theatrical life, he was unfortunately subject to something like an approach to asthma, which, especially when declaiming, obliged him alternately to (what is very vulgarly called) hawk and spit; but as his ear was very fine respecting poetical measure, he never suffered the expression of his infirmity to break the quantity of a line, and therefore let it stand as a substitute for the word or syllable displaced; as thus, in *Cato*:—

My bane and (hawk) tidote are both before me:

This in a moment brings me to my (hawk),

And this informs me I can never (spit),

Or imagine the gallant Douglas, had Sheridan

ever played the young hero, addressing Lord and Lady Randolph with—

My name is (hawkye); on the Grampian (spits)

My father feeds his (hawks); a frugal (spits),

Whose constant care, &c. &c. &c.

I also possess a Highland cap which once was Mr. Henderson's. He was the first actor I can remember noticing, in the first play I ever saw; having been taken, when very young, to see Henry the Fourth, in which Henderson played Falstaff,—a character well calculated for a child (as I then was) to remark above the rest. Mr. Lewis played the Prince of Wales. I recollect Mr. Henderson much more vividly in the "Spanish Friar," and Austin, in the "Count of Narbonne;" which last I saw him play on the night of Mrs. Stephen Kemble's *début* (then Miss Satchel) at Covent-Garden Theatre: but what I am most impressed with, is the contrasted excellence of his serious and comic recitations at Freemasons' Hall, where he broke people's hearts with the story of Le Fevre, and then nearly killed them over again with laughing at John Gilpin.

A namesake, if not a relation, of Mr. Henderson, lately told me that avarice was a predominant failing in the private character of this impressive actor, "who called," says the relater, "one day on my late excellent friend, Dr.

Fryer, to present him, as a compliment, with tickets for his (Henderson's) benefit. The good and benevolent doctor, who knew the actor's foible, and bore with it, as he did with the failings of every one,—instead of accepting the tickets as a present, offered the money for them, which Henderson took with a blush; and as he put it in his pocket, struck his forehead with the unemployed hand, burst into tears, and said, 'I am ashamed; but, by G—d, I can't help it!'" Many distinguished actors have been subject to touches of lunacy; and nothing but symptoms of a similar temporary visitation could have accounted for such conduct, the authority for which is too respectable to be doubted. I remember being told by that child of integrity, John Ledger, of Covent-Garden, on the morning of Mr. Henderson's decease, that he had fallen a victim to an opiate administered by mistake, instead of a different medicine. By a similar error I believe we have lately been deprived of my friend Owen, of the Royal Academy.

To return to Covent-Garden in 1799.—On the seventh of October I produced a musical piece in commemoration of our numerous marine triumphs, under the title of the "Naval Pillar:" the principal character in it was a Quaker, which was inimitably well acted by Mr. Munden. On

the first night of the piece I had the honour of being introduced to Mrs. Inchbald by Mr. Lewis, who left us *tête-à-tête* in Mr. Harris's private box. This talented lady expressed considerable surprise that I should possess nerve sufficient to be present at the first representation of my own farce : I acknowledged it might be rather fool-hardy, and imply a lack of diffidence or sensibility ; but in the present instance, the butterfly which was, in case of condemnation, to be broken on the wheel, was too *volage* to be worth alarm : " and were it otherwise," I added, " I never could trust a friend's report with respect to how a piece might be received ; as, in case of failure, the truth would be much softened down ; and should alteration be necessary, I ought personally to witness the fault in order to be a better judge of what remedy should be applied." I ventured, too, to remark to the authoress, that, though not earlier introduced, I had the pleasure of being very near her when *she* witnessed the first night of her comedy of " Lovers' Vows," to which she made no reply, as the new piece was just commencing. She paid it much more attention than I thought it deserved, till after Munden's Quaker had excited considerable laughter ; when Mrs. Inchbald suddenly turned from the stage to me, and asked whether it would be of " material consequence,"

if I were to omit that Quaker, *in toto*, on the following night. I did not dare to express myself with such colloquial vulgarity as to say I considered my Habbakuk as the “fiddle of the piece;” but respectfully replied, that it was of the most “material consequence” to me to retain so powerful a support to my weakly offspring. The lady observed, “it was very unfortunate,” and soon after quitted the box, which Mr. Lewis shortly after re-entered; and having seated himself in Mrs. Inchbald’s unoccupied place, told me that Mrs. Inchbald was shortly to bring out a comedy called “the Wise Man of the East,” in which were a whole family of Quakers; and apprehensive of being anticipated by my bantling, the lady had requested Mr. Harris to ask me, what, in fact, he did not think exactly fair to do, and therefore commissioned Mr. Lewis to bring the fair authoress and me in contact, in order that she might essay her own influence: and it was fortunate for me she had not heard of my Broadbrim till that very day, or I much fear I should have been prevailed on to sacrifice so leading a feature of my own piece to the supposed advantage of her play, which was quite as successful without my assistance. Mr. Lewis gave me the pleasure of knowing Mr. Harris perfectly approved my refusal; and as the “Naval Pillar”

was extremely well received, I went home in very good spirits. The new music in the "Naval Pillar" was composed by John Moorhead; and one dance was so popular, that it was afterwards introduced in "Speed the Plough;" changing its name from the "Naval Pillar" to that of the comedy; and remains an established favourite.

My next essay was the pantomime of the "Volcano, or the Rival Harlequins," the music of which was also composed by Moorhead. Relative to the probable success of this pantomime there was much doubt at the last rehearsal; when the late facetious Mr. Wild, prompter, who was always a friend of mine, seeing me rather alarmed at the *good-natured* predictions round me, threw a guinea on his table, and said if I would put it in my pocket, he would take a shilling a night for it during the run of the pantomime: cheered by his kindness, I accepted his wager, if such it was; and had the pleasure of repaying him nearly double the sum before the pantomime ceased to be attractive.

Two days only prior to this, "Good-natured Jem" (for so, and most deservedly, was Wild very generally designated) accompanied my brothers and myself in the sad procession which followed the remains of my grandmother Pitt,

to St. James's Chapel, Pentonville. A morning paper, next day, contained the following article, of which whoever might be the author, he spoke only the simple truth :—

“ Mrs. Pitt, who, for upwards of fifty years was distinguished for her very great abilities as a comic actress at Covent-Garden Theatre, died on Wednesday last, in the 79th year of her age. Her acting bore the stamp of genuine merit and originality ; and the rich vein of humorous expression which pervaded her performances of the Nurse in ‘ Romeo and Juliet,’ Aunt Deborah in ‘ Love in a Village,’ Widow Loveit in the ‘ Commissary,’ Dorcas in ‘ Rosina,’ &c. &c. &c. is impressively remembered by many admirers of the drama. Her children and grandchildren (to whom she was a most affectionate parent and friend) have to reflect, in mitigation of their regret, that the termination of her life was from a gradual decay of nature, that she quitted the world without pain, and possessed her faculties entire to the last.”

On the 19th of February, 1800, my Muse was caught tripping, and my farce of “ True Friends” had nearly proved very inimical to my interests : it was acted but five nights ; but, though a

failure, it produced me one feeling of genuine pleasure. There were not wanting croakers about the theatre, who, fond of disseminating their own groundless discontents, would whisper in my ear, on all occasions of success, "Take care, young man! Mr. Harris is very kind to you at present: but make your market while he is in the humour: the first, the very first reverse, will change this smiling weather, take my word for it!" I must do myself the justice to say I gave no credit to such insinuations; and on occasion of the present temporary reverse, I found I was quite right, and that the loss of my imaginary "True Friends" had not deprived me of one *real* one. Mr. Harris paid me more than usual attention; and one night, when adversity came "hissing-hot" from pit and gallery, kindly helped me on with my great-coat, and exclaimed,—“An audience is seldom wrong: but in this case, my dear Dibdin! I cannot imagine why they hiss: can you?” I laughingly told him I supposed they were angry because the farce was over; went home, got a few Welsh airs from my Cambrian friend Doctor Pugh, went hard to writing, and in one month from that time, received a balm for my wounded vanity in the complete success of "St. David's Day,"—a ballad farce in two acts, which became

a stock piece for many seasons, and is still occasionally represented.

For Mr. Lewis's benefit I brought out a one-act piece called the "Hermione," commemorative of one of our victorious naval exploits: this trifling piece was repeated very frequently, and was particularly in request on benefit nights.

I passed the Passion Week with my family, on a visit to a relative of my wife's at Richmond; and though we had merry dinners and pleasant evenings, my mornings were not idle: from Monday till Saturday I wrote a three-act comedy called "Liberal Opinions," which shortly after was acted, producing the theatre some profit, and me £200, including the copy-right. As a rather flattering proof that this comedy met the taste of the audience, I was requested, the next season, to extend it from three to five acts, which I did; and its increased success, under the new title of "The School for Prejudice," fully justified the alteration, rather an unusual one; as five-act plays are oftener curtailed to three, and three-act comedies cut down to farces, than any necessity discovered for prolonging that which has already succeeded. This lucky hit closed my labours for the season, in the list of which I have to name a farce I wrote for Drury-Lane to oblige Mr. Bannister, which was

by him christened "Of Age To-morrow." As I was *bonâ fide* in the employ of Mr. Harris at this time, I took no remuneration for that simple but successful piece, except three drawings, presented me by Mr. B. and accepting his kind offer to perform (which he did two or three summers) for Mrs. Dibdin's benefit at Richmond. The farce was of German origin, and imported, in that language, by Mr. Papendick, one of His late Majesty's pages, who offered it to Mr. Harris. Mr. Harris declined it; and I was permitted to put it in its present form without being named as the author. A song by Mr. Colman, and one by the late M. G. Lewis, Esq. were introduced, on the farce being acted.

I also had the honour (for such it most certainly was) of being selected by her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth to write a sort of *vaudeville* farce, to be performed at Frogmore Lodge, before their Majesties and the royal family, at a *fête* given in celebration of the recovery of the late Princess Amelia from a dangerous indisposition. With respect to the execution of this commission, I shall take leave to relate one or two rather curious accompanying circumstances.

While, prior to the commencement of the season just passed, I was busily employed on

the pantomime of the "Volcano" at a friend's house at Stratford, in Essex, I was favoured with a letter from Mrs. Mattocks, requesting me to come to town, and call on her immediately in Soho-square. As it was my duty to wait on Mr. Harris once a week at the theatre, and inspect the preparations for the pantomime, and other matters I was engaged in,—I took the first of those days to wait on that excellent actress, who, with symptoms of heart-felt delight, congratulated me on the commission she had the honour to bear respecting the piece I have just alluded to. I need not say how grateful I felt for the distinction, how much I thanked Mrs. Mattocks for her participation in my feelings, and how eagerly I inquired who were to represent the *dramatis personæ* of what I might prevail on my Muse to elicit. Mrs. M. said there need only be three principal parts, which would be acted by herself, Mr. Quick, and Mr. Elliston. She entreated me to pay particular attention to the character to be assigned to *her*, as she had need enough, God knew! of every assistance an author could afford her; while Quick was such a favourite of His Majesty, that he would be able to make *any thing* tell."—"And Mr. Elliston, Madam?" asked I, "he is a gentleman I know little of: in what does his *forte* consist?"

—“O, my dear sir! the king has seen him somewhere, at Weymouth, or Cheltenham,—and rather likes him; so he will do well enough as—a—sort of a—the *gentleman* of the piece”—“Which,” I replied, “it is not easy to make so good a part as the others;” this the lady assented to, treating it as a matter of no consequence. Just then Mr. Quick entered the room, and many compliments passed between the veteran pair. Finally, I had my instructions as to the length, &c. of the projected drama, and seemed to satisfy them, when I detailed the momentary thoughts which struck me as presenting an outline on which to form it. On bidding adieu, Mr. Quick, in spite of my opposition, insisted on seeing me down stairs; and with the street-door in his hand, and ‘the richest comic expression in his eye, whispered,—“Take care of me, and don’t give that woman all the cream.”

I had stipulated with Mrs. Mattocks for permission to be present, with my wife, during the performance at Frogmore; and after transmitting a more detailed plan of what I meant to do, received, some days after, the following letter:—

“I had the honour, dear sir! this morning, of an interview with Her Royal Highness the Princess Elizabeth. She is entirely satisfied and

pleased with the plan of our little comedy, and was pleased to express herself very graciously with respect to your talents, and your undertaking our play. As soon as it is done, have the goodness to send it me, that I may immediately get our different characters copied out, and send the piece itself to Her Royal Highness. I don't know whether it is practicable—but if you could find somebody to copy out our parts as you write them, it would save time, and that would be saving what is very material. Any expense you may incur, I will discharge.

“ I am, dear Sir,

“ Your very obliged humble servant,

“ ISABELLA MATTOCKS.

“ P. S. Mrs. Dibdin (to whom I beg my compliments) and yourself have leave to come to Frogmore.”

It was further intimated to me, on calling in Soho-square, that I was to receive THREE GUINEAS for the piece. I, in great astonishment, stated to Mrs. Mattocks, first, that in the few days since my seeing her, I had finished the piece completely, and paid one guinea to a copyist for making a fair transcript; and, anticipating her wish, another guinea for writing out the parts: and, secondly, that although it was but a one-act

piece, I could not accept what was offered for it; nor was I desirous of any other remuneration than the distinguished honour of contributing to the amusement of the august party to be present, and of having the happiness to render the humble effort of my Muse acceptable to Her Royal Highness. Mrs. Mattocks replied, it was quite impossible the piece could be *accepted* on any terms but that of payment, and that what was offered was in proportion to the other expenses of the intended *fête*. I therefore began to take leave; when Mrs. Mattocks, perceiving I had the manuscript and copies of the parts with me, begged I would reconsider the matter, which I said was unnecessary, as I should feel but too much honoured in presenting my drama as a dutiful tribute of respect, but could not accept payment beneath what the *minimum* of a minor theatre would have given me. "Then," said Mrs. M. "confide in me: I will shield you from the idea of having meant any offence; and you shall have reason to be satisfied." With this assurance, I left the copies: the day of representation came, and was so tempestuously rainy, that neither wife nor self felt inclined to quit our friend's comfortable fire-side at Stratford for a wet seat in Berkshire; and the piece, which was to have been performed in the

gardens, was exhibited in a temporary theatre, hastily erected within doors: I was assured it received unqualified approbation from all present. Some days afterwards, I again saw Mrs. Mattocks, who put a paper in my hand and left me: it contained five guineas, out of which I had paid two, besides the expense of visits to town, &c. &c. Mr. Brawn, one of the king's pages, was present, which prevented my being able to discuss the matter with Mrs. Mattocks at that moment. Mr. Lewis too had advised me to take what was offered; but, as Mrs. M. had intimated that something similar would be wanted on a future occasion, he, Mr. Lewis, recommended I should name a preliminary price when applied to.

A twelvemonth after, Mrs. Mattocks, one night, in the green-room, whispered in my ear, with one of her very comic laughs,—“I've got you another job!”—I begged till next day to consider; and wrote, by Mr. Lewis's advice, that as a one-act piece at Covent-Garden would produce me fifty pounds, I hoped I was not presuming in declining to undertake one elsewhere under thirty pounds, especially as I was then much occupied: to this I received no answer; “and so ends the history of the Haunted Tower.”

The reader will observe I have not complained of the *price* (horribly vulgar word!) given me; but that I was refused, by certain agents, the alternative of presenting my work gratuitously, and compelled to accept what I did. I have no doubt but that a certain sum was liberally assigned by Her Royal Highness, in certain quarters, to certain conductors of the *fête* on their own scale, and that the less they expended the more remained for themselves.

The novelties of Covent-Garden, produced this season by other authors, were Mr. Reynolds's comedy of "Management;" "the Turnpike Gate," by Mr. Knight; "Wise Man of the East," a comedy, by Mrs. Inchbald; "Joanna of Montfaucon," a romantic play from the German, by Mr. Cumberland, who invited me to his lodgings, in Charles-street, St. James's-square, to hear him read it before it went into rehearsal, and asked me to play in it. The reason why he wished me to appear, arose from his having put into the mouth of an opposite character, addressing himself to me, "O, you have *no* genius, not you!"—"which," said Mr. Cumberland, "being taken by the audience in the contrary sense, will not fail to occasion three rounds of applause." With all my deference to

the venerable bard's opinion, I could not exactly coincide with it in this instance, and respectfully declined the experiment.

At the last rehearsal of "Joanna," Mr. Wild, the prompter, asked the author for an order to admit two friends to the boxes; and whether Mr. Cumberland was thinking of the probable proceeds of his play, or whether his anxiety otherwise bewildered him, cannot be ascertained; but he wrote, instead of the usual "two to the boxes"—"admit two pounds two." Wild often exhibited this order to his friends, and kept it as a *bijou* among his other theatrical curiosities.

The next, and most successful production of the season, was Mr. Morton's comedy of "Speed the Plough," which added some thousands to the treasury. "Paul and Virginia" was also a permanent hit; and, except my "True Friends," not a piece played the manager false during the whole season.

When, on making arrangements for the ensuing year, Mr. Harris requested me to put "Liberal Opinions" into five acts, my never-failing friend Lewis gave me an ingenious piece of advice, which I have found truly valuable, and insert it here for the benefit of all young dramatists, as a hint by no means to be neglected:—"My dear Tom!" said Lewis, "this will be your

first five-act production; and don't be offended, if an old practitioner ventures to offer (from the respect he bears you) the fruits of his long experience. Half-price is a very proper privilege for those whose time or pockets do not afford them an opportunity of visiting the theatre earlier; but it is often the bane of an author, on the first night of a five-act play. The newcomers know nothing of the foregone part of the drama; and having no context with which to connect allusions in the fourth and fifth acts, are apt to damn, without consideration, that which they are no judges of;

And what they cannot comprehend, deny.

To be forearmed against this contingency, contrive to make some character (either in the heat of passion, or in any way you please) briefly run over all the foregoing part of the story, so as to put every one in possession of what they otherwise would have lost by absence; and, take my word, you will reap the benefit of it."

If I had a glass of wine now in my hand, I would (though any thing but a toper) drain it to the memory of Billy Lewis, of whose disinterested and gentlemanly kindness I shall yet have to give many a gratifying instance.

Two memorable circumstances occurred du-

ring this season. At Covent-Garden ; the confederation of the “Glorious Eight,” by which distinction Messrs. Incledon, Johnstone, Fawcett, Pope, Holman, Munden, Knight, and H. Johnstone were designated ; and an alarming attempt on the life of His late Majesty, by James Hadfield, a maniac, who fired a pistol-ball into the royal box at Drury-Lane Theatre. The first incident concluded in a reconciliation brought about by the good offices of the Lord Chamberlain ; and the latter terminated in the trial and confinement of the unfortunate insane.

My receipts from the theatre this year were as under :—

	£	s.
One year's salary, at five pounds per week	260	0
The comedy of “ Liberal Opinions,” including copy-right, and the alterations and additions necessary to convert it into five acts	200	0
Farce of “ St. David's Day,” and copy-right	50	0
Copy-right of “ Naval Pillar,” from Barkers	20	0
Copy-right in songs of “ the Volcano ”	10	0
Profit on Mrs. Mattocks's commission ; viz. received for piece	5	5
Paid copying manuscript	1	1
Ditto parts	1	1
	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
		<u>3</u>
		<u>3</u>
	£543	3

Mrs. Dibdin's salary, and one-third of her benefit, at a late period of the season, conjointly with Mr. Emery and Mrs. Chapman, is a separate account, which amounted to a very trifle: three pounds per week, play-house pay, (as it is called) that is, ten shillings each night the theatre is open, will be about ninety pounds;—a small proportion towards very honourable expenses it would be uninteresting to state, but which were well known to the theatrical world.

Among other incidents, I have to record the arrival of brother Cecil at my lodgings, with his wife and five children: his eldest daughter, the only remaining child of poor Mary, his first wife, remained with us; Cecil went, with the remainder of his family, to the theatre at Nottingham; and at the period of his benefit, I got a fortnight's holiday, with letters of recommendation from Mr. Bannister to Smith Wright, Esq. the banker, and late candidate for parliament; and Benjamin Thompson, the translator of "the Stranger," &c. already mentioned. I went to Nottingham, and filled Cecil's house by playing Ephraim in "Liberal Opinions;" Killruddery in "the Horse and Widow;" and wrote a comic description of the town, which I sang, and it occasionally is introduced to this day. I also, at the request of some families

there, played a second night for the benefit of a Mr. Gordon, who afterwards appeared at Drury-Lane in the part of Goldfinch. I never met a more convivial town than Nottingham: Mr. Smith Wright, and Mr. Thompson, out of respect to Mr. Bannister, introduced me to many of the most respectable families, as well as to the late Mr. Grubb, a proprietor of Drury-Lane; Captain Jennings, of Chesterfield; and Messrs. Davison and Hawksworth, of Arnold. A dinner party was made for me at each of their houses, and suppers given after the play during the whole of the eight or ten days I remained there; and many a pleasant meeting have we since had in London in commemoration of Nottingham hospitality. I wish I could speak as well of its inns as its private houses—two, in particular: it is not likely they are, at this distance of time, kept by the same landlords; but with respect to what they were in the year 1800, I shall close this chapter with a pair of couplets, which Cecil made extemporaneously on their want of common civility:—

No animals ever were half so ill-bred
As the Nottingham “Lion,” and “Buffalo’s Head:”
Yet no wonder each form of politeness they ravage;
Since one is a brute, and the other a savage.

CHAP. XIII.

1800-1801.

“Unwearied diligence has still kept waking.”

Third campaign at Covent-Garden—George Cooke—“*Il Bondocani*”—“*Harlequin's Tour*”—“*School for Prejudice*”—Trip to Gloucester—Richmond—Mr. Lewis—How to make a play-bill—Townsend the actor—Colchester and Co.—And, though last not least, “the Cabinet.”

THE theatre, as usual, re-opened about the middle of September; and early in October, Mr. Blanchard and Mr. Brunton, both from the Theatre-Royal Norwich, made their first appearances in London: their success is known. The last day of October was celebrated by the *début* of my old friend George Cooke in the part of King Richard the Third. Mr. Harris attended every rehearsal, seemed very much delighted, and more than once asked Cooke whether he had not formed himself on observation of Garrick? Cooke's answer was, that he had never seen the great Roscius in his life.

When Cooke came to town, he knew scarcely any one in London, and lodged at the One Bell Inn in the Strand. He very prudently rejected all invitations before his appearance; and the first he accepted after his *début* was from me: he was anxious to go over all our Manchester retrospections; and as Mr. Reynolds's comedy of "Life" was to come out on the night after Cooke's appearance, I thought we might safely dine late at my residence and go to the theatre in time for the new play, without risk of Mr. Cooke being the worse on the score of London hospitality; and so we did, and the play was very successful. Cooke sat with Mrs. Dibdin and myself till the conclusion of the comedy. I then, for form's sake, asked whether he meant to return with us: he replied, "certainly not; he had not as yet got a private lodging, and was determined to find one that night;" and so we parted, at which I expressed regret.

My hypocrisy, however, was punished: my wife and self had been about an hour chatting in the green-room, and were just quitting the theatre, when we again met Mr. Cooke, who expressed much pleasure at having procured a lodging in the vicinity of the theatre, and still greater satisfaction at our not having left it, as he was now determined to spend the evening with us. Had this proposition come from any

other friend, and one much less welcome than Cooke—it would have given us great pleasure; but I knew my man; and though very happy to see him over a broiled bone and a glass of negus, I had my apprehensions that Cooke would have been much the better for early retirement.

After many nods and winks from my better half, who did not dare leave the supper-table and me at the mercy of the Manchester Roscius, at seven o'clock in a cold November morning, there being no coach to be obtained, I accompanied my friend George on foot from Goodge-street to Martlett-court, Bow-street. As we crossed Oxford-street from Rathbone-place, Cooke gave me some papers, begging me to take care of them, as being of the greatest consequence in respect to a suit then pending between his wife (once my wife's bridesmaid, and now Mrs. Windsor of Bath) and himself in the Court of Consistory. It is proper to observe Mrs. Cooke was the complainant, and subsequently obtained a verdict in her favour. I, of course, promised to take great care of these papers, when Cooke turned short round on me, and asked, "What for? give me them back: I shall have them used against me else." I conceived I was answerable to Mr. Harris for Mr. Cooke being properly disposed of after having dined and

supped with me, and therefore took not the slightest notice of any thing he said, which might appear offensive; and finding he every moment halted to tell a long story, I observed, I had heard that when in the army, he had always been accounted a bad one at a march, from not being able to step in time. On his looking terrifically indignant, I expressed my disbelief of the calumny; and to give him an opportunity of disproving it, I proposed to whistle a quick march, and observe whether or not he did not keep just time: he chuckled, with a sort of contempt, at the proposal; and we went, at a tolerably steady quick step, as far as the middle of Greek-street, when Cooke, who had passed his hand along all the palisades and shutters as he marched, came in contact with the recently painted new front of a coach-maker's shop, from which he obtained a complete handful of wet colour. Without any explanation to me as to the cause of his anger, he rushed suddenly into the middle of the street, and raised a stone which, in respect to its magnitude, Polypheme might not have rejected in his desire to crush the shepherd Acis. This fragment Cooke was going to hurl against the unoffending windows; but I was in time to save them from destruction, and him from the watch-house. On my asking the cause of his hostility

to the premises of a man who could not have offended him, he replied, with a hiccup, "What! not offend? a d—d ignorant coachmaker, to leave his house out, new-painted, at this time of night!" I agreed it was infamous conduct, and advised him to let me lay a complaint at Bow-street next day, which quite satisfied poor George; and after whistling him the rest of the way to Martlett-court, I returned home, planning a line of conduct to be observed respecting him in future. All London was at this time on the *qui vive* respecting Cooke's recent impresssion on the public; and I have often thought what curiosity would have been excited to see him marching home in merry quick time, with the author of "Mother Goose" as his fife-major,—and what a subject the duo would have furnished to Rowlandson or Cruikshanks.

I forgot to say that he stopped in the middle of Soho-square, and with thundering emphasis uttered the interjection "Hah!" in a tone about ten degrees beyond the strongest aspiration of our stoutest street-paviors. "There!" said Cooke, "tell Harris what my voice effected, after a hard drinking-bout, at seven in the morning, in Soho-square."—"I will, my good friend!" said I. "Will you, indeed," replied Cooke, "be such an enemy to your old friend? 'What business,' Harris will say, 'had Cooke

in Soho-square at seven in the morning?" and thus, through your forward friendship, I shall lose my situation!" He uttered much more nonsense; compared the bright moon to Mr. Harris, and a dark cloud to Mr. Kemble, with whom, he said, he would play any part by way of wager for—for—yes, for a god.

After Mr. Cooke had been successful in several characters, I acquainted Mr. Harris with his (Cooke's) excellence in the part of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, but could gain no credence for a time. Mr. Harris observed that the superlative talent of Mr. Macklin was so predominant in all recollections, that it would be madness for Cooke to run a risk of blasting his newly-won laurels by attempting what might be a step beyond him. At last, it was settled, by way of probation, that Mr. Cooke should *essay* Sir Archy Macsarcasm on Mr. Lewis's forthcoming benefit night. My opinion was, that such a part would be a too gradual preparation, when Cooke ought to burst on the town at once in all the fulness of Sir Pertinax; but I was speaking to gentlemen who had not seen Cooke play Sir Pertinax, and who attributed my very sincere and well-founded opinion to exuberance of friendship for the actor, while I had the mutual interest of both actor and theatre in view. Mr. Cooke first played Sir Archy; and afterwards, in Sir Pertinax, more

than realized all my prophecies respecting his success in that part; and which Mr. Harris most candidly acknowledged and thanked me for, at many a pleasant party, where Cooke's assistance to Covent-Garden was most liberally acknowledged.

Either this season or the following, (I forget which,) Mrs. Dibdin went, by permission, to Rochester, to play a week with our friend Mrs. Baker; and our old Kentish patrons expressed to my wife how much gratified and obliged they would feel if Mr. Cooke could be (by any fair means) induced to appear at Rochester: I told this to Mr. Harris, who expressed no objection, if it did not interfere with Cooke's Covent-Garden duties; and perhaps George might have realized a respectable sum by a night or two's trip; but when I had smoothed the way for all this, he positively refused to go for more than one night, and that night (without any remuneration) should be for Mrs. Dibdin's benefit: it was with difficulty I prevailed on him to let me pay for his post-chaise. He played, and electrified the audience;—never played better, and never was more collected, which we rejoiced at, because Mr. Harris (as it were) lent him to us at our peril. Mrs. Dibdin's remuneration for her own playing at Rochester was to be a benefit shared with Mrs. Baker, and never was the theatre

fuller. Cooke supped with Mrs. Baker's family, agreed to breakfast with them, retired in good time, and begged a chaise might be ready for his early return in the morning, accepting at the same time an invitation to dine with us, on his arrival in town, in Goodge-street, that (to use his own idiom) he might be kept out of all mischief. Persevering in these good intentions, he breakfasted, as appointed; and, the chaise not arriving to the instant agreed on, he stepped out for a moment, as he said: in ten minutes the carriage came to the door; and for ten and twenty minutes after, no Mr. Cooke: at length, after long inquiry, some information was obtained that he was on board a distinguished ship in the Medway. Some friends instantly accompanied Mrs. Dibdin in a boat; and after much trouble, got possession of the stray sheep, who arrived in Goodge-street at four o'clock. Benjamin Thompson, Mr. Heath the celebrated engraver, and one or two other friends, met Mr. Cooke at dinner, and we put him, perfectly collected, into a coach, to go to the theatre, at half-past five: I then rejoiced, imagining my responsibility to be at an end; and in half an hour after, my friends accompanied me to the theatre, where Cooke had not arrived, and that night he made the first *faux-pas* of the many which unfortunately succeeded it. When he *did come*, he was

so far *gone*, that I am not certain whether some one else did not finish the part of Richard that night for him. Wherever he had called, after quitting my party, he must have made quick work of it; for with us he had been abstemious in the extreme; and however greatly indebted I had felt for his gracing Mrs. Dibdin's benefit with his successful exertions, I was still more thankful for the very rigid caution he appeared to adopt, to prevent any unpleasant occurrence resulting from Mr. Harris's kind indulgence to us:—it may therefore be easily conceived how much we grieved at his reason being thus unexpectedly shipwrecked in sight of *port*, I was going to say, but that, from me, would be termed a pun. When Mr. Harris next saw Mrs. Dibdin, he, in his jocose manner, which she did not comprehend, gave her a look of pretended anger, which sent her home in tears. I immediately went to the theatre to convince Mr. H. how little we were to blame; when he said, with one of his most exquisitely good-humoured smiles,—“You could not help it; and if you could, there is no harm done. If Cooke don't get drunk oftener than once a month, the odd lapse will do no harm; for when he is *not* inebriated, the audience will not only give him credit for his excellent acting, but they will applaud him for a negative virtue: ‘Only see,’ they’ll cry, ‘how very *sober* he is!’

a sort of commendation which a really praiseworthy actor would never aspire to be entitled to."

Soon after the production of Mr. Reynolds's comedy, Mr. Harris sent me a number of the *Monthly Mirror*, in which the plot was detailed of a French piece called the "Caliph of Bagdad," and strongly recommended the story for my adaptation to the English stage. I immediately reminded him that I had a three-act opera already written on the subject, from Florian's *New Tales*, which he had five years ago first accepted, and then returned, to make room for Mr. O'Keeffe's "Wicklow Gold Mines." On recollection of the circumstance, Mr. Harris desired me to let Mr. Lewis read the piece, which he did, and gave so strong a verdict in its favour, that it was put into rehearsal immediately, and produced under the title of "Il Bondocani, or the Caliph Robber." Thus two pieces, (this and the "Jew and the Doctor,") which had been rejected in consequence of coming in contact with the elder and indisputable claims of Mr. O'Keeffe, at length found their way to the public by mere chance. Mr. Attwood and John Moorhead jointly composed the music of "Il Bondocani," and with great success. Three days before it was produced, Mr. Munden very unexpectedly refused

to play the part of the Cadi, which he had several times rehearsed ; when, at the joint solicitation of Mr. Harris, the two musical composers, and myself, Mr. Fawcett, with great kindness, undertook the character, and by his excellent acting gave it no small celebrity. On the second night of the piece, our kind Cadi found on his dressing-table a tall pair of silver candlesticks, gratefully inscribed to "The Light of the True Believers," as a small tribute of thanks from Messrs. Moorhead, Attwood, and myself, for the friendly zeal Mr. Fawcett had shown in our cause. A coolness, in consequence, arose between Mr. Munden and myself, the cause of whose secession was no fault of mine ; and when the "School for Prejudice" was put into rehearsal, Mr. Munden also declined the part of Old Liberal, which he had performed in the three-act drama with great and deserved applause. Mr. Harris now interfered, and made us shake hands : Mr. Munden took back the part, and the comedy was acted with unmixed applause throughout. His late Majesty more than once honoured it with a command.

It is rather curious, that although *every* performer in this play, during rehearsal, expressed themselves much pleased with it as a whole, yet there was not a single incident but what was

marked out by one or other, confidentially, as the *only* dangerous part of the comedy ; no two persons naming the same objection : so that could I have cut out all I was advised to do, I must have omitted the whole play, which some may think would have been better for the public, but whose high good-humour on every night the “School for Prejudice” was acted, hushed every well-meant prior apprehension.

I was equally fortunate at Christmas in the Pantomime of “Harlequin’s Tour,” which exhibited a succession of scenery, representing nearly all our fashionable spots of summer resort usually termed watering-places, with appropriate machinery, and stage business corresponding with the subject : this pantomime stole a march on that of the rival theatre, Mr. Harris bringing it out the night before Christmas eve,—a piece of policy which produced a very full house ; when otherwise, it is more than probable there would not have been the expenses of the night taken in the theatre. Jem Wild drew very largely on me for shillings in return for guineas ventured on the run of each of the above adventures, and very glad was I to be the loser : and here closed all such bargains with poor Wild, who, to the sincere regret of all who knew him, died the following summer at Liverpool, in consequence of

the rupture of a blood-vessel, and was laid by the side of John Palmer, whose awfully sudden death had occurred on the Liverpool stage about a year preceding.

I omitted to mention, that during my "Jew and Doctor" season at Maidstone, the late Mr. John Palmer played there several nights; and this actor, whom I had so looked up to at the Royalty in my boyhood, particularly in "Don Juan," I at last had the felicity of acting with in that popular serious pantomime, in which I sang the sea song originally given by the late Mr. Sedgwick. Mr. Palmer arrived, the first day of his performing, just time enough for rehearsal, accompanied by Mr. Dowton; and Mrs. Baker sent to request I would dine with them at her house, and help to do the honours of the theatre to the "great grand" actor from Drury-Lane, whose footsteps, when a boy, I had idolized.

On the night of his appearance at Maidstone, Mr. Palmer said he was making a collection of characteristic and eccentric epitaphs, and asked me whether I could help him to any, or write a few, as they would assist a particular work he was interested for: I promised to think about it, but saw Mr. Palmer no more: the following summer made *one* epitaph sufficient for him.

Speaking of epitaphs,—some of the old *Ad-li-*

bitum club (Mr. Const for instance) may remember our attempting one day to introduce a toast from one gentleman to the memory of a departed friend, whom we termed a skull; while a second gentleman was called on for an *extempore* epitaph or eulogy:—the subjoined one, which I gave on the memory of that renowned book-worm Isaac Read having been proposed, got into the public prints, with about a dozen others of mine, purporting to be copied from genuine inscriptions in distant church-yards, but which were born in our club-room:—

Reader! by these four lines take heed,
And mend your life for my sake;
For you must die like *Isaac Read*,
Though you *read* till your *eyes ache*.

Mr. C. giving the memory of John Palmer, and calling on Mr. D. for his eulogium, elicited the following:—

In Joseph what actor could Palmer surpass,
In Bobadil, Blushenly, Brush, or in Brass?
Or who could in Stukely, Don John, or Don Juan,
Compete with the old one, who play'd like a *new* one?

Charles Incledon being asked,—for “a skull,” gave “The Jolly young Waterman.” On another day, being pressed to sing, when I was really very hoarse, I pleaded, in excuse, that I

had such a cold, it quite *killed* me. “Your epitaph! your epitaph! or else your song!” was the universal command, enforced by the chair. Preferring a short recitation to the fatigue of a long song, I gave —

Longing, while living, for laurel and bays,
Under this willow a *poor* poet *lays* :
With little to censure, and less to praise,
He wrote twelve dozen and threescore plays ;
He finish'd his “Life,” and he went his ways.

Covent-Garden, in addition to the pieces already mentioned this season, produced—Mr. Reynolds’s “Life,” Mr. Colman’s “Poor Gentleman,” Mr. Fawcett’s “Perouse,” Mr. Morton’s “Blind Girl,” somebody’s “What would the Man be at?” Dimond’s “Sea-Side Story,” a stranger’s “Who’s the Rogue?” and, on Mrs. Dibdin’s night, the “Alonzo and Imogine,” which I had brought out, four or five years back, at Sadler’s Wells, was received very favourably.

When I had seen the “School for Prejudice” safe landed, I accompanied, *pour distraire*, my old friend Russell on a trip to Gloucester, where he was engaged to play a certain number of nights : I played for his benefit, and wrote and sang a comic description of the city of Gloucester ; after which the manager offered us a joint

engagement, and me a benefit, if we would both play six nights longer : this we acceded to ; and my night, which was patronised by Sir John and Lady Douglas, paid the expenses of my frolic : Russell played Archer for me, and I attempted the part of Scrub.

This year, the “ Naval Pillar ” and the pantomime being included in my salary, and “ the School for Prejudice ” having been accounted for in the preceding season,—I had only “ Il Bondocani ” to receive for, which produced me sixty pounds ; the copy-right of “ the Naval Pillar,” twenty ; and songs in the pantomime, about fifteen.

We passed the summer (and many following ones) at Richmond, where my wife had a good engagement, and generally a great benefit, *i. e.* nearly a hundred pounds ; as besides her individual interest in the town, we had always some popular *star* to aid the attractions of the night.

This summer (1801) Mr. Lewis took a house of a friend of ours on Barnes-Green ; and as we both had to meet Mr. Harris at the theatre every Saturday, I was in the habit of walking to Mr. Lewis, and, when the weather was fair, he would walk with me to Covent-Garden, where we had to accompany Mr. Harris two or three times all over the theatre, inspecting scenery, alterations in the building, and other matters preparatory to the

ensuing season : which generally occupied from one to two hours ; when, on Mr. Harris's returning to Uxbridge, his merry deputy and I footed it back to Barnes, where I perhaps took a late dinner with Mr. Lewis, and walked home to Richmond in the evening. Mr. Lewis must have been approaching to three-score at this time ; yet he performed this weekly walk with a little switch in his hand, skipping across the roads like a lad of eighteen ; while his incessant good-humour and inexhaustible fund of comic anecdote rendered the distance between Barnes and London almost imperceptible. One day as we passed a Richmond play-bill, in which Mrs. Jordan's name presented itself in the largest possible type, he remarked on the numerous heart-burnings such kind of distinction often produced in provincial theatres, as well as the little squabbles arising from the order of precedence in which performers' names were placed in a play-bill. With respect to the latter, he highly commended Mr. Kemble's arrangement, by which the actors took rank in the bill according to the dignity (not the value) of the characters they had to perform : as in Hamlet, the king first, then Hamlet, and so progressively downwards ; and when the actors, dancers, chorus-singers, &c. represented equal characters *en masse*, as witches,

soldiers, citizens, peasants, &c. their names were always placed alphabetically, as Messrs. Abbot, Blanchard, Carles, &c. With respect to names printed in larger letters than the rest, Mr. Lewis mentioned a whimsical circumstance occurring to himself, when he had engaged to play six nights at a considerable distance from the capital, and the manager had stuck up a very large LEWIS indeed. Only one member of the company (and he happened to be the worst actor in it) took umbrage at this display; and his indignation was so loud, that it happened to reach the ears of the envied nominee. Lewis was always fond of a joke; and having sought out his temporary employer, the two managers, town and country, laid their heads together how to give the grumbler a lesson; and next day's bills appeared with the names of the actors in general unusually *small*, Mr. Lewis's only distinguished by being much *smaller* than the rest, and that of the aggrieved hero in the LARGEST LETTER the printer's fount afforded;—a distinction so truly ridiculous, that even the malcontent joined in the laugh against himself, and was glad, from that time, to find his "post of honour in a private station." It should be added, that on the night of the play, the audience, who were in the secret of the hoax, gave this gentleman

(who had little more to do than announce others) three distinct rounds of applause at each of his entrances and exits.

At these weekly visits to Mr. Harris, I was in the habit of reading him my plans of what I had in contemplation for the ensuing season ; and his concise and (almost always) correct judgment on the subjects committed to him evinced that his long experience had not been useless : he seldom paid a compliment, or found a fault ; but passed over what he thought ineffective by doubling the leaves down so as to cancel it ; and where he was pleased with a passage, would say “ Let’s have a little more like this.” On meeting, he used to shake hands with his little finger ; and at parting, gave one, two, or three fingers, in proportion to the approbation he meant to bestow on what he had read : but to be favoured with his whole hand, denoted a perfect climax of applause, sometimes accompanied with “ Good boy ! good boy !” During my first few months’ intercourse with him, these gradations of his approval or dissent (as connected with my future advancement or failure in the theatre) usually had an evident effect on my spirits during the day ; and my wife, guessing the state of the theatrical thermometer, has remarked, when any extreme of depression

or exhilaration occurred, that I came home “as cold as a little finger,” or “as happy as a handful.”

When I submitted my pantomime outline, in the present summer, for preparation for Christmas, the following laconic and business-like approbation may serve as an example of his style on similar occasions for a period of fourteen years:—

Belmont, June 23, 1801.

“Dear Dibdin,

“I think you have got a very good foundation indeed for your pantomime (‘Harlequin’s Almanack, or the Four Seasons’). I hope Creswell has shown you models of the tricks and machinery you interweave in your plan. You may, as soon as you please, consult with the painters also.

“I shall be with you on Saturday next.

“Yours very truly,

“T. HARRIS.”

Some months prior to this, the late Mr. Townsend, of Covent-Garden Theatre, had very much pressed me to write a kind of vehicle for the introduction of his celebrated imitations, to be interspersed with comic songs, anecdotes, &c. &c. and offered me my own terms if I would take

a short excursion with him to Colchester, Ipswich, and Norwich, where he was an immense favourite, and where, as he said, we should be sure to realize wonderful profits. I made a half promise to try this experiment with him; but no time was specified, and, of course, I expected a long previous notice in order to make proper prearrangements: judge then of my astonishment, when he came to my door at Richmond one day, with a carriage, which he said was to carry me to town with him that evening, and to Colchester the next morning; at which city, under great patronage, he had actually advertised us both under a general announcement of comic songs, recitation, imitation, &c. &c. I, at first, thought he was joking; but with a thousand apologies, he assured me that, relying on my willingness to serve him, and knowing I had plenty of *matériel* in my desk and in my head, he had so committed himself to his friends at Colchester, that if I did not go, he never would be able to show his face there again; and, if I *did* go, we should make a little fortune. I was always passionately fond of any fair excuse for travelling; had just had a very hard fortnight's work of writing; and although I held out for some time against so extraordinary a proposal, I at length consented; and having so done, entered into

the undertaking with spirit, and determined to go through it with a good grace. As I always kept my scraps of lyrical and literary attempt in rather methodical order, as well as the music of what songs I had occasionally written, with a view to forming the sort of entertainment now wanted,—I was soon able to fill the pockets of the carriage with a copious store to select from; and after dinner we set off for Townsend's house at Pentonville, where, before bed-time, I arranged the greater part of the next night's exhibition, and finished it next morning in the post-chaise, which merrily rolled along with Townsend, myself, and our accompanying piano-forte player and assistant singer, (on a salary,) to Colchester. The day before, in the evening, and during the whole of the morning's journey, Townsend was in the highest spirits imaginable, enjoying the jokes in our intended *mélange*, and adding many of his own. As we had a sort of running rehearsal in the carriage, nobody would have supposed we had the fear of our future audience before our eyes had our mirth been observed; our musical friend too rather increased than diminished it, by not only being "exceedingly melancholy and gentleman-like" during the whole way, but "so very faint" every five minutes, that we were obliged to stop

for what Townsend called a little rosin, to rub up the spirits of the poor musician, who thought each refreshing glass he took on the road a great improvement in our plan. As soon as he saw the dinner-table at Colchester, and very formidable preparations for covering it, his spirits rose in proportion as (to my astonishment, and almost dismay) those of Townsend utterly forsook him. Buoyed up as I had been by his florid predictions of success, imagine my surprise, when he looked from the window "up the street and down the street," and then drew his head in, muttering, with an oath,—"I'll be —— if we shall have a soul here to see us to-night: the town is quite empty; and we shall make a pretty trip of it." I was half induced to fear "his wits were not so blunt" as they should be, and asked him why he had so deceived himself and me? He tried to rally, and I soon saw that it was a natural inequality of spirits, which caused him to be now as low as *double G*, and by-and-by in *alt*. A glass of wine presented him a better medium to see through; and after dinner, we hastily rehearsed the contents of our budget at the piano-forte in the assembly-room, where we were presently to deliver it in public. This very necessary previous ceremony finished, it was time to dress; and as my chamber was

on the great staircase, I anticipated the pleasure I should feel from hearing each of the numerous footsteps of that crowded and brilliant auditory I was about to encounter ; but though I listened (to speak elegantly) with all my ears, not one,—no, not one—could I distinguish ; and was hesitating whether or not it would be worth while to finish my costume by putting on my coat, when Townsend, with a face still more melancholy by (what all men of theatrical talent are more or less afflicted with) stage-fear, faintly said, “ Come, we are waited for :” and taking my arm, led me into a brilliantly-lighted room quite full of well-dressed company, among whom the proportion of elegant women amounted to at least two-thirds of the whole : and this may serve to account for my hearing no bustle on the stairs, which being well carpeted, the light footsteps of the ladies and their beaux in ball costume (for there was to be an optional dance after the performance) might easily pass by my door unnoticed. That the tongues of so many gay females should have been equally *sub silentio*, may create some wonder, if not disbelief ; but it is the duty of every historian to relate things as he finds them.

The trifle we exhibited was called “ Some-

thing New." It was not only well received from beginning to end; but several of the leading folks, between the acts, having signified a wish that we should give them another night—I, at the conclusion, boldly announced the entertainment to be repeated, with additional songs, on the evening next but one, under the title of "Nothing New." It took me the whole of the intermediate day to make good this promise; and I caused our poor dear musical assistant to be "very faint indeed" several times, from the severity of copying my arrangements, Townsend laughing merrily at us the whole time; for it not being "play-day," (as nights of performance are called by actors,) it was really a day of play to him while we worked; no study being necessary for him, as he would only have to read (and not get by heart) his portion of what I prepared; for which labour I was to have my expenses paid, and half the money taken at the doors.

Well, there was "Nothing New" the next night; for Townsend had his usual fit of despondency, the ladies and gentlemen walked softly on the carpet, filled the room, laughed and encored as before; and Townsend unexpectedly closed his imitations by giving a very pointed one of myself, while I stood behind

him. The audience appeared to doubt the fairness of this, and would not laugh; when my coadjutor's countenance beginning to fall, he was commencing an apology, and had got as far as "impropriety and indelicacy,"—when, stepping before him, I assured our patrons that my friend had acted by my free consent; and that to relieve him and them from the kind restraint they appeared to be under, I should instantly sanction Mr. Townsend's attempt by my own example, hoping to share in their applause by taking off myself. Townsend was rather indisposed at supper; and as I had received a letter that afternoon from Brandon, stating Mr. Harris would want to see me in a day or two, we agreed to postpone our further march; shared the spoil, which was by no means contemptible, and by much the most solid part of our evening's entertainment; and with "Nothing New" in my portmanteau, and "*Something New*" in my purse, I set off from Colchester at five in the morning, and was at home in my parlour at Richmond to dinner, quite as comfortable as if Townsend had never taken me out of it.

As this gentleman is also one on my obituary list, I may add here, that though no convenient opportunity afterwards occurred to enable us to

hunt in couples again, we were always remarkably good friends; and my first act, after becoming a proprietor of Sadler's Wells in the following year, was to advise my partners to join me in giving Townsend twelve pounds per week, which he accepted "as freely as 'twas given:" besides which, I wrote him a ditty, since published under the title of "Townsend at the End of the Town," which was sung at his house-warming dinner, when he took the Horns Tavern at Kennington.

We have heard of more "*last*" words; but I was present at a dinner *before* the opening dinner just mentioned, when Messrs. Lewis, Morton, Knight, Fawcett, and one or two more boys of the Garden, (I believe Mr. Braham was one,) surprised Townsend with a visit, and were the first customers who hanelled his mahogany. Townsend's anxiety brought his good-natured round face down to its occasional *triste* state of elongation: he could not help whispering me, as I passed, "This tavern-keeping is an infernal life!" and his *dolor* was at the height, when making his first appearance, as a real Boniface, to place our principal dish on the table, with an involuntary sigh, — Morton wickedly exclaimed, —

How like a fawning publican he looks!

The crisis of despondency was passed ; he turned the joke from him by immediately resuming his natural good-humour ; sat down with us ; and few folks in that county passed a merrier afternoon than we did.

The business on which Mr. Harris wished to see me in town was to inform me that Mrs. Billington was engaged to perform alternately at both theatres, and that, in order to counterbalance the effect of that departed siren's attraction against the receipts of his own house on the nights she would be engaged at the other, he had, *sub rosa*, engaged Signora Storace and Mr. Braham for the whole of the ensuing season ; and as they wished to appear in a new opera, he (Mr. Harris) begged I would lay aside for the present a piece I had, at his instance, begun for Covent-Garden, and, if possible, write him an opera in a month from that time. I represented how impossible it would be to ascertain what time my first essay at a full opera of three acts would occupy : my anxiety to repay the confidence he had in me, and to please the distinguished performers he had engaged, would most probably retard, rather than forward, my endeavours ; but that, at all events, I would promise him the outline of an opera by that day se'nnight, which, if approved, would leave me a

week for each of the three acts to be afterwards undertaken.

In my way home, I bought a ballad from the Duke of Richmond's wall, which then enclosed Privy-Gardens: it was called "the Golden Bull," and had before been recommended to me as a "workable subject," by an actor of the Richmond Theatre. As soon as I got into the stage coach, I began to turn my Bull all manner of ways:—a king sending back the presents of his daughter's lover, among which was a Golden Bull, (the princess concealing herself in the splendid animal,) makes a very successful elopement; and this I thought (changing Taurus into a Cabinet) might make a good finish for a first act: the princess, escaping from the rivals who discovered her concealment, leaped from a high rock into a river: this (but I was over-ruled) I thought would have been a grand *coup de théâtre* for the close of the second act: and the fishing island, with fine new gondolas, and a home-spun British seaman, would carry me safely to the fall of the curtain. Immediately acting on these suggestions, I wrote my plan of the opera the next morning; and not only sent it by the day promised to Mr. Harris, but added the first act completely finished. His pithy reply was—

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ Nothing can be more promising than your outline ; go on, and prosper.

“ Ever yours,

“ T. H.”

I therefore proceeded ; and in a fortnight and five days from our first interview on the subject, my “ Cabinet,” and all its imagined prospective treasure, was safe in the manager’s possession.

CHAP. XIV.

1801-1802.

“The riches of the ship are come on shore.”—*Othello*.

Rain after Sunshine—Commencement of my fourth campaign — Cabinet councils — Composers — Poor John Moorhead—Difficulties of pleasing rival singers—Prologues and epilogues—Mr. Lewis in Dublin—Old friends.

How frequently do we acknowledge Shakspeare's assertion, that

We all know security
Is mortals' chiefest enemy !

Lord Hastings, when he went to the Tower, never to return ; and many others, at the fancied consummation of their hopes,—have keenly experienced this truth as well as Tom Dibdin, who now considered himself one of the grandees of theatrical authorship. I had begun with one act, crept on to two, then three, and afterwards five,

in the line of farce and comedy ; and now I had an opera—a first opera (not a minor three-act opérette, like “ Il Bondocani”), actually accepted ; and therefore believed myself constituted a regular author ; no more a mere associate of after-piece-makers, but entitled to all the privileges and immunities belonging to a member of the five-act club. Besides this, I had the honour to be asked (as will soon be specified) by such men as Colman, Morton, Reynolds, and divers others, for prologues and epilogues to their respective plays, and songs for operas ; while, till I produced “ Five Miles Off,” at the Haymarket, a few years afterwards, I never could induce an author to write either prologue or epilogue for *me* : the constant joke was, “ Write to Tom Dibdin, and you’ll get it by return of post.”

In the midst of all this feverish exultation, I thought I saw (and blamed myself for the idea) a sort of coolness on the part of Mr. Harris. Whenever we talked of the opera, respecting which he had been quite as enthusiastic as myself,—“ Think of the pantomime, and let us get that forward,” was his constant reply. At length it transpired that Mr. Braham and Madame Storace had, while on the Continent, promised Mr. Prince Hoare that their *début* should be in an opera of his : this, Mr. Harris was till now as

much unacquainted with, as were Braham and Storace that I had turned *Cabinet-maker*; and so it came to pass, that the said Cabinet, so bespoke, so sought for, and so approved when finished, was, all at once, laid upon the shelf, in my manufactory, as an old shopkeeper. I confess I did not meet this unexpected reverse of prospect with all the philosophy my present more matured experience would have suggested. Had I, from any impulse of my own, written and presented the piece, the matter would have assumed a different form; but I was taken from other occupations, rather against my wishes; had laboured, *invita Minerva*, unprecedentedly hard; and my reward was disappointment. I became, in consequence, literally sulky: I went my rounds among the mechanists for the pantomime, and the artists in the painting-room, and the carpenters, tailors, &c., but always before the hour of Mr. Harris's visit to the theatre; and carefully avoided meeting him, who, however, found always his wishes anticipated respecting my annual task, but never found *me*. As this was our only difference in the course of many years, I relate it just as it was: it was a quarrel between son and father, for so I always took the liberty of calling Mr. Harris; and its conclusion not only proved I was not entirely in

the wrong, but served materially to cement a friendship, acknowledged by that kind man towards the writer of these Memoirs, within eight days of my good manager's dissolution.

While I was sulky, and my master was sorry, Mr. Attwood called on me, and asked whether it was true that I had a manuscript opera by me; as they wanted one very much at Drury-Lane, and were willing to give me two hundred pounds as a retainer for my piece, before perusal, hit or miss; and as much more, should it succeed, as any other successful author would be entitled to. Before I gave any decided answer, I asked whether the finances of Drury were in a state to secure me the sum named. Mr. Attwood's answer was, either that he had the money in his pocket-book, or that he was ready to lay it down himself.

As Mr. Attwood was the first composer I had written with at Covent-Garden, when we produced "the Mouth of the Nile," "the Escapes," "Albert and Adelaide," "Il Bondocani," &c., and as we had been on rather particular terms of intimacy,—I made no scruple (after thanking him for his kindness) of relating my situation with respect to "the Cabinet;" requesting (what was but fair) four-and-twenty hours only, to communicate with Mr. Harris; and then, as

that gentleman could not, in reason, reject and retain the opera too, I would give the Drury-Lane managers my decision. I immediately wrote to Mr. Harris, requesting permission to dispose of the piece, and received a note, desiring to see me immediately: the interview soon brought us to an amicable arrangement. "Chains of the Heart," the opera substituted for mine, not having met with the *éclat* it perhaps merited, Mr. Harris agreed that "the Cabinet" should be produced in February, which was considered the most eligible period of the season; the musical composers were to be chosen by myself, and paid by the theatre, which had never been previously the case; and I was further offered the same sum Mr. Attwood had named for the manuscript whether it should prove successful or not: this I declined, wishing only to be remunerated if successful; in which case, I stipulated to be paid as much as any preceding author had ever received at Covent-Garden for a three-act opera.

It had been arranged, in the first instance, that John Moorhead should compose the music, and he had received an advance of fifty pounds on account of it; but an unfortunate nervous attack, approaching rapidly to imbecility of mind, and ending in insanity, made it necessary to give

him partners in his work: the opening chorus, a song, and quartette, were all he was able to contribute; but Mr. Harris, feeling for the melancholy situation of Moorhead, liberally allowed him to keep the fifty pounds which had been advanced, and which amounted to half the price of composing the whole opera. Mr. Harris desired me to make use of his name with Messrs. Bianchi, Mazzinghi, and Shield: the first gentleman did not think his talent adapted for English opera; the second conceived the time would be too short to do justice; and from Mr. Shield I received the following:—

Berner's-street.

“ Dear Sir,

“ Since I saw you, I have endeavoured to get rid of some of my engagements, but find it impossible: all that I can promise, is to set ‘the Cabinet,’ in the course of the summer, for any part of next season; but if it is Mr. Harris’s determination to represent it speedily, it ought to be immediately given to some composer who has leisure and ability to make the sound an echo to the sense. That it may prove (whenever it is performed) profitable to you, to the theatre, and all who are interested in its success, is the sincere wish of yours truly,

“ WILLIAM SHIELD.

“P. S. We had proposed going to the theatre this evening to notice the best tones of Storace and Braham, but an unexpected letter from Lady S. Stewart makes me hope it will be full as agreeable to you some future evening. Best compliments to Mrs. Dibdin, &c.”

It was at length settled that Mr. Braham should compose as much as he chose of what himself and Storace were to sing: Mr. Corri had the Bird Duett; and Messrs. Reeve and Davy divided between them the remainder of what Mr. Moorhead had left, which was in fact two-thirds of the piece. Though many years have elapsed, it is yet fresh in many memories how very favourably “the Cabinet” was received: though late in the season, it was acted thirty nights; more than thirty the season following; and has remained a great favourite, and generally a very productive stock opera. In the varied critiques of the day now lying before me, it is called a good, an indifferent, a very foolish, and a very excellent opera: a criticism on its second representation says, that although lightened of much heavy matter, the ship was still too ponderous to keep afloat: but the truth is, it had gone off so well the first night, that it had *no* lightening at all, except omitting a comic scene;

to balance which, some omissions made on the first night were restored.

It is rather gratifying to the author, that a very celebrated editor, who was most prominent in severe abuse of the piece, some years after as publicly retracted his opinion, and assigned it a very respectable rank. Mr. Braham is the only composer living out of the five, who, by the great variety of their delightfully effective music, so largely contributed to the success of the opera: the effect of his Polacca, in particular, is well remembered, though on the first night it was little noticed; on which occasion Mr. Lewis evinced his taste in music was not inferior to his judgment as an actor, by prophesying that the Polacca would, in a few nights, be the first favourite in the opera. Reeve's comic compositions, sung by Storace, Fawcett, and Munden, have scarcely been equalled; nor will Corri's Bird Song be soon forgotten. Incledon's music was principally composed by Davy, whose first essay at composition in London was for a burletta of mine, and my first burletta had been composed by Reeve.

As this was the last season in which I had any material professional intercourse with Moorhead, I will just mention that his mental malady continued, with a few intervals, to increase, till he was some time confined in Northampton-house:

a relapse soon after, on quitting that asylum, led him into an extraordinary succession of eccentricities at Richmond, where he posted critical placards on the merits of contemporary composers, in the public reading-rooms, broke all the glasses and furniture in his lodgings, stopped the Duke of Queensberry's horses on Richmond Hill, and turned the carriage round, in spite of the well-applied lash of an athletic coachman; and one day, having snatched a Secretary to the Russian Embassy up in his arms, on the public walk at Richmond, and very nearly succeeded in an attempt to throw him in the Thames, poor Moorhead was committed, in a strait waistcoat, to Tothill-Fields Prison. Among minor wanderings, he had just before this laboured under the delusion that I had gone to Bath without paying him the respect of taking leave, and dispatched an unsealed letter after me, containing a challenge. I happened to meet him in Richmond, as he returned from putting it in the post, when he was quite as displeased at the idea that I had *not* gone to Bath. On this occasion, he walked into my lodging with me, and sat down by the fire: it was evening, and we were *tête-à-tête*. As his language was extravagant, and a little too high for any hope of soothing him, (for any attempt of that kind added fuel to the flame,) I began to contemplate what

means I should pursue to get rid of such a visitor, no one but a female servant happening to be within; and at length was obliged to make up my mind. He was a powerful man, about six feet high; and in his delirium boasted much of how easily he could crush any man who opposed him. I said I thought him too sanguine, and, for my own part, I had made up my mind how to place myself on an equality with a Hercules, should he condescend to take advantage of his merely superior physical powers. He sarcastically inquired, how? on which, I drew a red-hot poker from the fire; and being at a very well-measured fencing distance, I told him no power on earth should prevent my burying that glowing weapon in the bosom of any gentleman who did not respect the rights of hospitality: the parlour door opened immediately to the street, without any intervening passage; and Moorhead stalked stately up Richmond Hill in a twinkling,

Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind.

He had, very shortly before this, nearly killed Mr. Goodwin, the music copyist of Covent-Garden Theatre, on some imaginary cause of offence, by striking him on the temple with a large rummer glass: I had therefore some cause for apprehension; more particularly as

Moorhead's frantic ebullitions were generally directed against those who, in moments of sanity, he most valued and esteemed. I had, as before related, brought him to London, procured his brother and himself engagements at Sadler's Wells, prevailed on Mr. Harris to place him as a tenor in the orchestra of Covent-Garden, and in every musical production where I was concerned, I had given him opportunities of credit and emolument, besides obtaining for him the composition (with Davy) of "Perouse," and other profitable employments: but he was a destined man; his faults were entirely involuntary, and proceeded from constant fever in his head. The annexed letter, which I afterwards received from him when in Tothill-Fields Prison, will show his mind, though disordered, was rather of superior cast; his attainments as a scholar rather above the generality of his professional brethren; and even in his hours of derangement, one might truly say—

Though this be madness, yet there's method in 't.

Tothill-Fields Prison, Jan. 5th, 1803.

"Exordium."

"Dear Sir,"

"I have a great deal to say to you in extenuation of, and apology for, my repeated

misconduct towards you: I assure you, sir, I have a full sense of my errors, and hope I may, after this acknowledgment, be allowed to proceed to business.

“*Argumentum ad hominem*.—Your biography in the Monthly Mirror has given me particular satisfaction, as it reminds me of former times. Now, sir, the recollection of former times naturally brings ‘Alonzo and Imogine’ along with it: on that ground, I request you may put ‘Rudiger’ (a piece I had once given him to compose, and afterwards withdrawn: it was afterwards acted at the Surrey Theatre as the ‘Silver Swan’) into my hands for Sadler’s Wells, or any piece of the like kind. I make this request with some degree of confidence, relying on the same candour and justice which have marked your conduct towards me hitherto. My price for the Wells is ten guineas: I ask no more, and wish to go to work *sur l’instant*, as I want to employ my mind fully, and to get some money.

“To use one of your puns, Mr. Allingham has made a good hand of your head¹; better than Bob’s.²

¹ Alluding to a portrait of me painted by Mr. C. Allingham.

² Another portrait by Dighton.

“ *Peroratio*.—I shall rely on your speedy answer, as there is nothing (I sincerely assure you) on this earth will give me greater satisfaction than a reconciliation with you and your friends.

“ Best respects to Mrs. Dibdin, her sister, and your niece : I have a crow to pluck with — : it was not friendly of him to abuse my duett in his flimsy monthly publication : when you see him, say I said so, and that I shall remember his notice of me ; or you may deliver the message (*sæva indignatio fecit*) to his lady. I have an apology to make to Mr. Reeve, and wish him to understand I do not mean to interfere with him at the Wells. Best regards to your brother Charles and wife. Your obliged humble servant,

“ J. MOORHEAD.”

“ P. S. An Irishman ax'd ‘whether the weather-glass had fallen up or down ;’ and another countryman of mine (poor Pat!), going on the secret expedition, being dunned by a comrade for a debt of ten shillings,—tore a one-pound note in two, and the creditor accepted one of the halves as payment of his demand. A friend of mine lately translated ‘*Tam Marti quam Mercurio*’ into ‘more military than civil.’”

When Moorhead was liberated from Tothill-Fields, he entered, as a common sailor, on board Admiral Lord Keith’s ship, the *Monarch* : the

captain soon discovered the volunteer was equal to something better, and Lord Keith made him master of his band. One afternoon, while the ship lay in the Downs, the captain observing Moorhead more than usually depressed, gave him leave to go on shore for a day or two by way of relaxation: he called on a musical friend in Deal, who was giving a lesson, and Moorhead observed he would take a walk, and return to tea. He was never more seen alive, being found some days afterwards strangled with his handkerchief, which he had tied to the lower bar of a field gate: his brother Alexander, whom I have mentioned, and with whom we were always on the best terms, died shortly after in the Lunatic Asylum at Liverpool; as did, I believe, a third brother in a similar situation.

Moorhead had usually resided very near the cider-cellar in Maiden-lane, to which place he one evening entreated me to accompany him, that he might introduce me to his friend the celebrated Greek Professor Porson, who, as well as Moorhead, was so completely intoxicated, that the Professor took me for Moorhead, and Moorhead mistook the Professor for me.

In the course of rehearsing "the Cabinet," I met with innumerable difficulties respecting the songs, &c. Incledon and Braham were to be kept equally in the fore-ground: if one had a

ballad, the other was also to have one; each a martial or hunting-song; each a bravura; and they were to have a duett, in which each was to lead alternately. I, however, managed so as not to affect the general construction of the opera, although I wrote nearly twenty different subjects for music before I satisfied every one: several of these were to suit the difficult taste of Madame Storace, who one morning was so (more than usually) hard to please,—that taking my manuscript out of the prompter's hand, I buttoned it up in my surtout, and in great ire was leaving the stage, when I nearly tumbled over Mr. Harris, who had just entered: he soon stepped between the dignity of the singer and the tenacity of the author; and harmony was completely restored. Yet the Cabinet gave me infinitely less trouble than any opera I subsequently produced. "Zuma," in particular, had so many additional and unnecessary scenes written for the introduction of bravuras, concerted pieces, &c. and became so altered in the essential parts of its story, (which, when accepted by Mr. Harris, was by him pronounced the most consistently interesting plot I had ever given him,) that, when produced, it no more resembled its former self, than "She Stoops to Conquer" would be like the "Battle of Hexham."

At the commencement of this season, I wrote,

by desire, the prologue and epilogue to a play called "Integrity," which was acted to introduce the late Mr. Henry Siddons to a London audience. My verse asked less protection for the *débutant* than for the drama, on a fair expectation expressed in the prologue, that

The blood of Douglas would protect itself.

The actor succeeded ; but the play, which was a literal translation from the German, (I believe by Mr. Holcroft,) though unmarked with any other tokens of disapprobation than that of a thin attendance, was acted but two nights : this is certainly a more polished rational mode of condemning a play, and a more effectual one too, than can be found in all the hisses and orange-peels that ever emanated from the gods of any noisy gallery in Britain. Had Mr. Harris intrusted the play in question, for adaptation, to any one of the numerous authors who at this time were in the service of Covent-Garden, his "Integrity" would not have failed, even nominally, for the first and only time.

A musical farce, called "the Escapes," was put in preparation, certain duetts, songs, &c. in which wanted nothing but the words to complete them ; and I was applied to. I insert part of Mr. Attwood's written request, (as I shall some

others,) merely to prove I did not (as many anonymous letter-writers of that day chose to assume) obtrude myself on the public; but on most, or rather on all occasions, had "business thrust upon me."

"Dear Dibdin,

"'A friend in need is a friend indeed.' I am in great want of certain songs and duetts for 'the Escapes:' if you will oblige me by writing them, I shall esteem it a great favour, and be happy to pay whatever is your accustomed remuneration [for these "jobs" I never made a charge]. The fact is, I shall get nothing for 'the Escapes' without some additional songs, &c. and shall be extremely benefited, if you will undertake them. I have sent the chaise; that if you will indulge me by accompanying my father to town, we can settle everything: you shall have a comfortable bed; and your presence will certainly cause me an agreeable evening. If you can neither come to town, nor write them for me to-morrow, it will be of most serious consequence to me, and probably prevent the performance. Yours, &c. &c.

"T. ATTWOOD."

T. Dibdin, Esq. Richmond.

I also wrote the songs, &c. for Mr. Fawcett's

melo-drame of the "Brazen Mask," and those in a *petite pièce* called the "Definitive Treaty," the prologue to Sir Lumley Skeffington's comedy called the "Word of Honour," &c. &c. These little matters, and the successful pantomime of "Harlequin's Almanack," added to "the Cabinet," constituted the whole of my productions this season. I received £400 for the 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 20th nights of the "Cabinet;" £150 for the copy-right, reserving the privilege of selling the words of the songs in the theatre, which netted about £150. I gave great offence to the retail venders of the song-books in the theatre, by publishing them at ten-pence each book. The songs of a first opera always had been printed at one shilling; but the fruit-women, who scorn to take less than silver, expect an advance; so that a gentleman would be compelled to give eighteen-pence, which I always considered a shameful imposition, and which I was the first to remedy; as by printing them at ten-pence they were sold at a shilling, which could not be refused. This *douceur* was, however, thought too trifling, although I received but seven-pence halfpenny for each book, out of which I had to pay all expenses of printing and publication: my profit was, consequently, much less than that of the retailers in the theatre,

who cleared four-pence halfpenny by every book, unaccompanied with any risk or expense whatever, as they returned all unsold copies on my hands. When I therefore gained £150 by the sale, they could have little cause to complain on the receipt of a much larger profit; and yet, for many nights, they refused to sell the songs at all, because they were not allowed to tax the public in their usual way. My plan has been ever since adopted in all the theatres: if I have intruded the mention of it here, it is in the hope of conveying a useful hint to younger dramatists.

Mr. Reynolds's comedy of "Folly as it Flies," and Mr. M. G. Lewis's tragedy of "Alfonso, King of Castile," were first acted this season. Mrs. Billington played only (but to very great receipts) in old operas: Cooke's attraction and popularity rather increased than otherwise; and on the whole, Mr. Harris had to boast of a very lucrative year.

We again visited Richmond for the summer. My friend, Mr. Lewis, had often been solicited to perform there by the managers, and for individual benefits, but had never been prevailed on: he now, however, with his usual friendship, volunteered his services (which Mrs. Lewis announced to us in a very handsome letter) to play

on Mrs. Dibdin's benefit, when he electrified the Richmond folks by his exquisite performance of Marplot: I ventured to appear the same night as Watty Cockney. It was about this period Mr. Lewis expressed his intention of paying a farewell visit to Dublin, where he had commenced his theatrical career at the precocious age of ten years, and wished me to write him a valedictory address for the occasion; of which he dictated the first and last lines; and as they never were published,—(though not intending repetition of such favours) I here present my friends with a copy. The *vif* and impressive manner of the speaker caused it to be received with all the warmth of national enthusiasm, for which our brethren of the sister isle are so justly famed.

Address spoken by Mr. Lewis on the last night of his last engagement, at the Theatre Royal, Crow-street, Dublin.

From ten years old, till now near fifty-six,

If aught of profit, or if aught of fame

Be mine to boast, its origin I fix

Here on this favourite spot, where young I came,

And panted first for histrionic fame.

In "numbers lisping," here that course began,

Which, through your early aid, has smoothly ran;

And vain remembrance tells, that in this place,

(Perhaps because I wore a brazen face)

A veteran* prophesied that I, poor elf!
Should play the Copper Captain like himself.
Fired by the thought, I labour'd with delight,
And learn'd to "Rule a Wife" with all my might.
Here, oft returning from your sister land,
I've met your generous smiles, your liberal hand;
And long, with pride, my gratitude shall own
That hospitality so much your own:
But now the prompter Time, with warning bell,
Reminds me that I come to say—farewell!
With usual joy this visit I should pay,
But *here*—farewell is very hard to say.
Yet, take my thanks for thousand favours past;
My wishes, that your welfare long may last;
My promise, that though Time upon this face
May make his annual marks;—no time shall chase
Your memory, while memory *here* has place.
My meaning is sincere, though plainly spoke:
This heart, like all your own, is heart of oak:
And though the *bark*, through lapse of years, may fail
ye,—
You'll find the trunk composed of true shillalee.

A handsome present of Limerick gloves to my wife and self marked Mr. Lewis's satisfaction when he returned to England. The remainder of the summer was employed in writing the opera of "Family Quarrels," the pantomime of "Harlequin Sweepstakes," and some benefit

* Mr. Woodward.

addresses for individuals of the Richmond Theatre.

In the early part of the past winter season, my old friend Russell asked me to apply to Sir Henry Hawley, for his influence with his brother magistrates in Kent, towards obtaining a license to open the Gravesend Theatre. The two following extracts will prove that time had not weakened former friendly attachments:—

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ The enclosed you ought to have received sooner. I shall not attempt to thank you, my dear fellow! for the pains you have taken; you will ever possess my acknowledgments, &c. &c. Sir Henry Hawley seems the true friend of yourself and Mrs. Dibdin, and I must find an opportunity of letting him know how greatly he has obliged me in complying with your request, &c. &c.

“ Dear Dibdin, yours ever and most truly,

“ S. T. RUSSELL.”

Part of Sir Henry's enclosed note ran thus:—

Leybourne Grange, 13th Oct. 1801.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I this day received the favour of yours, and immediately wrote to Mr. Evans, the

town-clerk of Gravesend, in compliance with your desire; and said every thing I could in favour of Mr. Russell's application, which I sincerely hope the corporation and magistrates may accede to. I was extremely glad that my knowledge of Mr. Evans put it in my power to meet your wishes. Be assured, it will always give me the greatest pleasure to have any opportunity of showing my good-will to you and my friend Mrs. Dibdin: congratulate her from me on her success in town and at Richmond; and assure her, I should always feel more satisfaction in witnessing any approved effort of hers by the public, in whatever character she might undertake, than even from hearing the wonderful notes of the enchantress Billington. Should any thing occur in the theatrical world not mentioned in the papers, (particularly where you or Mrs. D. are interested,) and which you may be at liberty to divulge,—I shall always be grateful to receive your account of it. Poor Cooke! I fear his intemperance and want of stability will soon take from the public an excellent actor. Lady Hawley and family desire to be kindly remembered to you and Mrs. D. Believe me, my dear Sir,

“Yours most sincerely,

“H. HAWLEY.”

“P. S. We were very sorry not to be able to

attend Mr. Clifford's benefit, as he was yours and Mrs. Dibdin's friend and *protégé*. Lady Hawley and myself took the liberty of paying him a little compliment."

Cecil Pitt, Esq. of Dalston, my great uncle, died this year. I had rebelliously left my apprenticeship, and my brother (whom my uncle, at one period, declared his heir) faithfully served out his time, and stayed with his "principal" seven years beyond it: brother Cecil had neither pleased nor offended; and, after all, when Cecil the Great died, he left us all alike, *i. e.* one hundred pounds each, and the same to some other relatives; the bulk of his fortune to his own widow, and the children of another branch of the family. On the report of the will to me, I advanced £200 to two relations, who were legatees to that amount; and when I supposed I was going to receive that sum and my own hundred pounds, I found the legacies were not to be paid till the death of the widow;—in consequence of which, I waited seven years for the return of my money. One relative insisted on paying me four per cent, which I received till I was repaid the principal at the period when my great aunt died: she left me an additional ten pounds and my uncle's cane; thinking, no doubt,

I richly deserved the latter. My brother Charles and self stayed all night in our deceased uncle's house while he lay a corpse : it was the night of a general illumination on account of the preliminaries of peace being signed ; but the neighbours, who for thirty years had suspected Mr. Pitt, and rather justly, of too affectionate an attachment to his guineas for a man of his large property,—would have broken his windows, if we had not mounted guard with the coachman and footman ; the general cry being that old Mr. Pitt pretended to be dead, to save the expense of candles.

After my uncle's death, I got a severe cold and fever, by walking to Dalston in a hot day, and standing in the court-yard without a hat, to sell the widow's coach-horses. Subsequently to my recovery from a dangerous illness, Mr. Reeve, the composer, joined me in a trip to Bath : we travelled in his gig about thirty miles daily before dinner, and employed each evening, he in composing, and I in writing songs on various subjects for my next opera. At Bath, I was introduced to the late Mr. Dimond ; as also to his son, the dramatic author ; and, for the first time, to Mr. Elliston, for whose benefit I wrote a comic address and song, to be spoken and sung as a Jew, under the title of “ Abednego's Trip to Bath.” Mr. Reeve composed the song. The

Bath performers paid us great attention ; particularly Mr. and Mrs. Edwin, Mr. Charles Taylor, and the gentlemen of the Harmonic Society. I soon after wrote an entire evening's recitation, with songs, &c. for Mr. Elliston, which he delivered at Wells and other places, during the close of the Bath season, with great success. On coming home, we made a *détour* to visit several families nearly related to my wife, residing at Frome, Warminster, Stourhead, Castle-Carey, and Sherborne ; whose reception of us did great credit to the hearty characteristics of Somerset and Wilts ; several of each family, at the end of our visit, accompanying us to the next ; so that we gathered as we rolled, till, at Warminster, we composed a truly formidable party, which, from its numbers, attracted very general observation. Some time after my return to town, I received two very large silver cups from Mr. Elliston, which, in return for the labours of my pen above mentioned, he inscribed as " a tribute of gratitude for favours conferred by Thomas Dibdin on R. W. Elliston."

CHAP. XV.

1802—1803.

“ And the twelve tribes waxed wroth.”

Fifth campaign at Covent-Garden—“ Delays and Blunders”—“ Tale of Mystery”—Puffing—“ Family Quarrels,” and quarrels with the Jews—Advised to bring an action against myself—“ Harlequin Habeas”—“ John Bull”—Divertisement—Mr. Lee Lewes—His ultimatum—*Ad Libitum* Society—Literary Fund Club—Incledon’s tour—Sadler’s Wells—“ Keep the Line.”

MR. REYNOLDS’S comedy of “ Folly as it Flies,” and my *petite* opera of “ Il Bondocani,” opened Covent-Garden in September 1802, commencing the fifth year of my engagement. “ Delays and Blunders,” a comedy from the gentleman first mentioned, was the incipient novelty: this was followed by “ the Tale of Mystery,” a translation from the French by Mr. Holcroft, which was remarkable, not only from its great and merited success, but from the circumstance of its being the first entertainment acted on the English stage under the description

of melo-drame; the introduction of which, as a sort of non-descript in the regular drama, has given the minor theatres a certain degree of consideration, which, in many cases, has rendered them very formidable and important rivals to the Gog, Magog, and Little David of legitimate monopoly. We had, even at this time, seen many instances of the puff direct placed at the bottom of the patent play - bills, — which, after many fruitless attempts to discontinue, is now (thanks to better taste!) fast sinking into disuse. The Covent-Garden play-bill of November 16, 1802, after announcing “that the ‘Tale of Mystery’ was received with the same universal applause as honoured its first representation,” adds, while still speaking of approbation, “the *extreme was immense*.”

Mr. Harris had intended that my opera of “Family Quarrels” should appear very early in the season, but the continued attraction of “the Cabinet” rendered a change unnecessary; and it was not till the 18th of December this public event, so interesting to Jews as well as Christians, was permitted to take place. If I encountered a few difficulties, during the rehearsals of “the Cabinet,” in *suiting* the performers with songs which I had written, or intended to write, as naturally (if any thing

in the form of an opera can be natural) emanating from the dialogue and incidents of the piece, so as to form regular component parts, and harmonise with the general tone of the picture I wished to paint; if, I say, a few obstacles seemed to militate against my plan while preparing “the Cabinet;”—they were doubled and trebled in the present instance, so as almost to make me despair,—not of retaining the original outline of the piece, which had been highly approved by Mr. Harris,—but of bringing it before the public in any shape at all. Yet to have withdrawn it, would have been to sacrifice above half my year’s income, when I had not only my own immediate family, but nearly three hundred a year’s worth of relations to support; and to have offended my second father, (as I shall ever consider Mr. Harris,) and injure all my future interests. Suffice it to say, I wrote three-and-twenty different songs, &c. in exchange for those which were first intended; each requiring some trifling alteration in the drama by way of introduction, and each alteration diverging a line or two from the construction of my fable. With respect to criticism, then, I was placed on the forlorn hope, and fully considered my once promising progeny as an *enfant perdu*; when, as if to give a finishing blow to the little hope which

lay at the bottom of my Pandora's box, Mr. Fawcett, with the best possible intention as to aiding the effect of the piece, suggested, without (as many had done) making it a *sine qua non*, that I should write him a song, something in the style of my father's excellent comic ballad, called "the Ladies;" and moreover that *my* ladies, instead of being "Prides of Aurora," "Floras de Guzman," &c. &c. &c. should all be beauties of the Jewish persuasion. Thus circumscribed, what was I to do? Heaven knows that I, who had written and even played Abednego in "the Jew and the Doctor," and Ephraim in the "School for Prejudice," with no trifling applause from the critics of Whitechapel, Duke's-place, and Russell-court, never entertained, as Fribble says, "the minutest atom of an idea" that the harmless joke, as harmlessly suggested, could be taken as the most distant intention of giving offence. God help me, if all the attorneys I have publicly laughed at, and (as I hope to prosper) mean to laugh at again, should think proper to rise in a body, and do still more than many have done to crush me! Or what would become of my future health or that of my family, who have borne and do suffer so much from illness, if every M.D. or apothecary were to resent the nonsensical clap-traps I have coined

to produce the only cash out of which I was to pay their bills: but the twelve tribes were mistaken; and as all their efforts did not eventually effect the intended destruction of my piece, I freely forgive them, as I hope and trust those who even really believed I was wrong, have long since forgiven me: but to the fact.

At the first rehearsal of the song, with a full band on the stage, all seemed electrified in its favour; and even the orchestral sons of the pipe and string laid down their reeds and fiddles to applaud it: next day, however, a lady of the Hebrew race from Rochester, who for years had entertained great friendship for us, called, and assured me that a complete and general feeling prevailed all over the eastern districts, that I intended to insult her whole nation by a scurrilous song, written pointedly, (I was glad to hear that acknowledged,) and purposely in ridicule and dispraise of (what all who know me, know I worship *à la folie*) the *female* part of it. I indignantly disclaimed such an idea, and exhibited a copy of the fatal song: the lady professed herself convinced, but left us, as she said, with pain, equally convinced that nothing but omitting the song would ensure the opera from certain perdition. I immediately waited on Mr. Harris, who bade me be of good cheer, but

by no means to think of withdrawing the song; particularly as Mr. Fawcett declared *he* was by no means afraid to sing it. Mr. Harris added, that he hardly ever brought out a piece at any period, without its being preceded by anonymous threats; and my staunch friend Lewis said, "If there really *be* a conspiracy against the opera, that conspiracy will be the making of it: for I don't think a London audience ever errs in its judgment, and am quite sure they will never suffer any party, however numerous, to wrest their right of judgment from them."

Under these impressions we took the field, nine-tenths of the theatre laughing at our apprehensions. The enemy came, however, in great force, and by too early a manifestation of hostility put the unprejudiced part of the audience completely on their guard. Before the first song, a predetermination of opposition was alarmingly evident; and in allusion to a purchase I was then completing, a skirmishing corps of hostile sharp-shooters in the gallery began to cry, as a signal for the general charge, "It vont do! it vont do, I tell you! take it away! take it to Sadler's Vells!" The impending thunder grumbled, and subsided, and grumbled again, till the appearance of Fawcett in his "Jewish gaberdine" proved the chosen moment

for commencing an uproar, which, but for the subsequent O. P. row, of noisy memory, would never have been equalled. The song was sung and encored, but not heard, nor was any of the following part of the opera, or the words in which it was announced for repetition. We were all, more or less, in consternation: Messrs. Harris and Lewis still encouraged me; and the former advised a few lines in next morning's bill, disclaiming all intention to offend individuals, yet by no means to think of sacrificing the song. Many of the nobility and gentlemen, among my old patrons, and even some distinguished members of the Royal Family, encouraged me in the hope the public would see me safe through.

The head and front of the ensuing play-bill bore the following inscription, which had been resolved on at the board of the manager's privy council:—

“The author of the new opera, with implicit deference, assures the public, he never entertained the remotest idea of giving offence to any class of society, by the introduction of a character, which was not that of a Jew, but an assumed disguise, and which, had there been no interruption arising from misconception, would have appeared as no more intended to convey dis-

respect, than were either the parts of Ephraim in 'the School for Prejudice,' or Abednego in 'the Jew and Doctor,' which have hitherto been honoured with the most flattering and general approbation."

The newspapers were unanimous in censuring this partial attack on the piece; and a leading one asserted, in almost Mr. Lewis's former words, that such conduct would make a much worse opera succeed. The opposition was scarcely less on the second representation; and it may be curious to compare one or two instances of conflicting accounts given on the following morning:—

Times, Dec. 21st, 1802.

"The new opera of 'Family Quarrels,' performed for the second time yesterday evening, attracted an overflowing audience in every part of the house. Several judicious alterations have been made, and the piece, in its present state, promises to be as popular as any production of the same author. In the second act, some confusion was occasioned by a general call for Fawcett's song, descriptive of the charms of the Misses Abrahams, Levi, and Moses, which was

encored on Saturday evening : the audience being informed the song did not belong to that part of the opera, tranquillity was restored ; and upon Fawcett's appearance, *he begged their indulgence not to sing it, from the feelings with which he was personally influenced. The appeal was received with general plaudits : the encores were as numerous as on the first night ; and several scenes, which were then but indistinctly heard, proved very considerable additions to the interest of the opera : among them we remarked the escape of the lovers, which forms a leading feature in the connection of the incidents."*

Morning Herald, same day.

“ ‘ Family Quarrels ’ was repeated last night to an overflowing audience : several alterations have been made ; and the piece, on the whole, considerably improved. The passage which, on the first night, gave offence to the Jews, has been omitted (this was not the case) ; and in its present state, though it may not rank very high as a literary production, it possesses sufficient *harmony* of parts to be entitled to the approbation of the public. *Fawcett's Jew's song was encored by a great majority of the audience ; but the opposition was very strong : no further interruption took*

place, and the conclusion was more successful than that of the first representation."

Morning Post.

" ' Family Quarrels ' was last night repeated, to the high satisfaction of as crowded an audience as the house could contain. By the prudence and facility with which the passages that gave offence to the Jews had been removed, (a well-intended error of the press,) the opposition of Saturday appeared to be now entirely reconciled to its success: frequent bursts of applause were interrupted by no murmur of disapprobation. In the second act, a part of the audience, suspicious that the pleasing humorous song of the Jew pedler's Ballad of Mistresses was about to be left out, called for it with no small impatience and clamour: they were appeased, by information from the stage, that its place was in the third act, when it was heard with that gay and lively satisfaction which the humour both of the poetry and the music is well fitted to excite; but its *encore* was too much for the patience of those by whom a part of its ridicule had not been well relished on Saturday: others demanded repetition. Fawcett complied, but, amid the contention, retired; then returning,

entreated, as a favour to himself personally, they would excuse his imperfect recollection, which made him really unable to repeat the song. The contention was then entirely hushed; the opera proceeded to its close with every mark of general approbation; and nothing but plaudits was heard when it was announced for a third representation."

British Press.—*Mr. T. Dibdin's new opera.*
Fourth night.

"It was reported in the morning, that many Jews of the lower class had formed themselves into a regular phalanx, and were to renew their opposition, under the direction of the ass, whose cruel brayings were so successfully exerted the first night. No such occurrence, however, took place. '*Family Quarrels*' were suffered to proceed in *peace*: the pedler's song, in which he gives such a diverting account of his mistresses charms, and his own disappointments, was *encored* amidst the loudest bursts of applause, and without the slightest murmur of disapprobation."

In conclusion, the following short extracts are from a writer in the *Oracle*:—

“ I was present on the first night of ‘ Family Quarrels,’ and hasten to denounce the conduct of those who disgraced themselves by as groundless an opposition as ever disturbed an audience : it was a frivolous and ill-founded opposition, calculated to the prejudice and overthrow of the stage. The natives of Yorkshire had as good right to remonstrate against the liberties taken with them through the medium of the character (performed by Emery) named Mushroom. If this degree of affected delicacy be justifiable, we ought soon to expect remonstrances from Scotland, Ireland, and every part of England against jokes passed on them by poets of all ages : John Bull treats such squeamish notions with contempt, and will never, to gratify individual prejudice, combine against the freedom of the stage. The opposition to this new opera was therefore frivolous and vexatious to the pit.”

Richardson’s Hotel, Covent-Garden.

How far the theatre profited by the piece, may be gathered from my share of its produce, which was contingent, and which (including my sale of ten-penny song-books) amounted to about six hundred and thirty pounds.

A paper, which had spoken in rather virulent terms against the “ Cabinet,” was so still more

violently outrageous against "Family Quarrels," that Mr. Holcroft seriously advised me to bring an action for libel, on the ground that the critic's remarks might seriously affect my means of obtaining a livelihood. I was grateful for the warm and kind interest the bard took in my behalf; and showing him Mr. Harris's check on Stephenson, Batson, and Remington, replied,—

Till they rail the *name* from off this draught,
They but offend their lungs to speak so loud.

He was still, however, more indignant at what he deemed an unworthy attempt to hold me up to ridicule in another journal, by the insertion of a comic parody on Norval's celebrated recital of his young adventures, and which was afterwards copied into "the Spirit of the Public Journals." I appeased his good-natured zeal, and jealousy for my fame in this respect, by assuring him (as was the case) I had written the said offensive parody myself one morning in Mr. Harris's room of business, while I was waiting for that gentleman at the theatre. Mr. Waddy, who happened to come in, and was supposed to be much connected with the diurnal press, very coolly slipped the paper into his pocket, whence he transferred it to a morning paper, just as I had scribbled it in form as follows:—

PARODY.

My name 's TOM DIBDIN ; far o'er Ludgate-hill,
My master kept his shop,—a frugal cit,
Whose constant cares were to increase his store,
And keep his only 'prentice, me, at home ;
For I had heard of tragedies, and long'd
To mimic on the stage some warlike lord ;
And fortune granted me what trade denied.
Yon moon, which rose one night across Moor-fields,
Had scarcely fill'd her horns, when by her light
A band of merry mad-caps from the town
Rush'd like a torrent to the water's edge,
Seeking the Margate Hoy : with them I fled
For liberty of acting ; and alone,
With hasty strides, and bundle thin of linen,
Hover'd about the coast of Kent ; and mark
The track I took : I hasten'd to Eastbourne,
Where Richland, with a troop of actor folks,
I met advancing : merry lives we led,
Till we oft eased the cash-encumber'd clowns.
I wrote and acted : ere long time had flown,
A scribble from my quill produced a farce,
Which bore that day the name that now it bears.¹
Elated thence, with triumph I disdain'd
A country actor's life ; and having heard
That Mister Harris wanted some bold bard
To lead his actors to old Nilus' side,—
I left my manager, and took with me
A chosen fair-one to console my steps,—
Yon faithful female who delights her master.
Journeying to town from Kent, I pass'd the Tower,
And, chance-directed, came this day to *do*
An opera, that 's wormwood to the Jews.

¹ Jew and Doctor.

My Christmas pantomime was "Harlequin Habeas, or the Hall of Spectres," in which the ghosts in "Hamlet," "Don Juan," "Bluebeard," the "Castle Spectre," and other popularly terrific dramas were successfully introduced; and the pantomime had the usual run.

At this time I had never been introduced to Mr. Colman, except in a momentary interview, some years back, relative to his letter already inserted. The celebrated comedy of "John Bull" was very forward in rehearsal, when I received the annexed note from Mr. Fawcett:—

"Dear Dibdin,"

"Mr. Colman will be much obliged to you, if you will write the prologue to his new comedy. I send this from the theatre, and should have called on you, but have particular business. I know Mr. Harris will thank you to do it, and so will,

"Dear Dibdin, yours truly,

"J. FAWCETT."

February 7th, 1803.

I had too much vanity not to feel proud of Mr. Colman's selection, and did *mon possible*. The prologue went off well, and was translated into a French journal, to inform our Gallic critics

what sort of animal John Bull estimated himself to be. The distinguished success of the play needs no record here. Shortly after I had written the prologue, I had a letter from Mr. Lewis, of which please to take an extract :—

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ I wish you would take the trouble of altering the accompanying divertisement into as short a medium as you can for a few songs, after ‘ John Bull,’ as soon as possible : the thing never had, nor ever was meant to have a fable. There is no occasion to retain any of the present songs ; only contrive to produce Braham and Storace in the masquerade, with a new song for Munden, Fawcett, or Emery. Dubois might be in it, to sing and dance with Mrs. Wybrow, Bologna, &c. Mrs. Martyr, Mrs. Mills, King, Incledon, Hill, and Darley will help to make enough business for an hour. The manner of combining their talents I throw on you.

“ Yours sincerely,

“ W. THO. LEWIS.

“ The old finale ever was the devil : comic singing and dancing, at the same time, would produce proper effect for the end of a masquerade.”

This order (though much more difficult to

execute than it would have been to write a piece *de novo*) I instantly complied with, and the event answered every expectation.

There were also produced (principally farces, and for benefits) “All’s Fair in Love;” “The Harper’s Daughter;” “Hints for Painters;” “Tale of Terror;” “The Fair Fugitives,” by Miss Porter; and I had, as usual, the honour of writing comic songs for several comic actors’ nights. Mr. Lee Lewes (formerly one of the gods of my idolatry at the Royalty Theatre) literally took a farewell benefit at Covent-Garden this season, for two mornings after he was found dead in his bed. I wrote the address which he spoke for the last time on Covent-Garden boards, and which was described in the play-bill as “Lee Lewes’s Ultimatum.” The day before his benefit, he had asked me a loan of two guineas; after his decease, that sum was found in one of his pockets, in a paper labelled for me.—He ate a hearty supper, with my brother Charles, at the Sir Hugh Middleton’s Head, on the last night of his existence; and said, at parting, he feared it would do him no good, although he had been any thing but intemperate.

On the death of Captain Hewerdine, I had the honour to be elected poet-laureat, not to the pipe of wine and 100 marks, but to the *Ad Libi-*

tum Beef-Steak Club, held during different periods at the Shakspeare, the Piazza Coffee-house, Robins's Rooms, and at the Bedford, and where beef-steaks, pork-chops, mutton-chops, and kidneys were really dressed in the room, served up, and eaten, and those only. The principal members were Mr. Const; Lord Kensington; Sir John Turner; Messrs. George and Joseph Ranking; Earl Mountnorris; Lord Valentia; Messrs. Nixons, of Basinghall-street; Mr. Shaw; Mess. John and W. A. Madocks, members for Boston; Mr. Maberly, member for Northampton; Mr. Blackburn, member for Lancaster; Mr. Shakspeare; Mr. Nichol, of Doctors'-commons; Mr. Symmons, of Paddington-house; Mr. Lukin; Mr. Middleton, of the Customs; General Arabin; Mr. Foulkes, member for Stamford; Mr. Nichol, brother of Sir John; Mr. Leach, &c. &c. I was to produce a song once a year, which I believe I voluntarily increased to once a month: my probationary ditty was the *Æneid*, with the death of Dido: then followed the Siege of Troy, an abridgement of Ovid, *cum multis aliis*, all of which were favourites. The members of this society introduced me to another,—the Literary Fund Club, composed of committee members of the Literary Fund Society; among whom were the Duke of Somerset, the late Earl of Chichester,

Sir Benjamin Hobhouse, the Rev. Dr. Yates, my friends the Rankings, Mr. Fitzgerald, &c. &c.

A day or two after Sir Benjamin Hobhouse had been created a baronet, he took the chair at the St. Alban's Tavern in St. Alban's-street, when a few of the club members, before dinner, suggested the propriety of recollecting the accession of title with which Sir Benjamin had been so recently honoured; and, as we had not had the pleasure of seeing him since he was plain Mr. Hobhouse, it was hinted how carefully we should be on our guard not to neglect giving him his newly-acquired title. If this had not been so formally urged, I am quite certain, that from common report of the circumstance, I should have naturally addressed Sir Benjamin with all possible propriety; but from having been, in common with others, particularly exhorted to remember the "Sir" now legally preceding the name of our respected president, I thought of it till it completely bewildered me. It was an old-fashioned custom, when a gentleman of that club had made a recitation, or sung a song, for the president to drink such gentleman's health and return him thanks, for which he was expected to make a suitable acknowledgment; and as I had the honour (or on that day the misfortune) to be the crack singer of the corps, Sir Benjamin gave

my health with very particular marks of approbation after my first song. It was (as in most other societies) our use to address the president as "Mr. Chair;" and when I arose for that purpose, the sudden recollection of the new title crossed me, so as to confuse my ideas; but determined to be right, I said, with much respect, "Sir Chair!" then, as awkwardly correcting myself, I stammered out, with equal diffidence, "I beg pardon; I meant Mr. Benjamin." A completely good-natured shout of laughter relieved me, and all present, from the embarrassment this *faux-pas* occasioned, and no one met the mistake with greater kindness than Sir Benjamin himself. The noblemen and gentlemen of the Literary Fund and *Ad Libitum* Societies, with whom I was so often a guest, did me the honour, for many seasons, to dine with me, in a plain beef-steak club way once a year. At the time the murderer Patch was about to be tried, Mr. Const, who had never been an absentee from my annual board, sent me the following jocular apology:—

"My dear Sir,

"In hopes of meeting you yesterday, I have deferred acknowledging the receipt of your kind remembrancer (although as a remem-

brance it was unnecessary) of Monday next. I hoped I should be able, as usual, to avail myself of your kind invitation; but this villanous *Patch* cannot be removed to any other day. If I cannot say, with Othello, ‘Murder is out of *tune*,’ I can swear it is out of *time* on this occasion, which to so musical an ear as mine is just as harsh. I always thought business a d—d ungentlemanlike sort of employment; but never regretted so much being obliged to attend to it. Should any accident put off the trial, I shall, without ceremony, join you; if not, I can only regret the disappointment.

“I remain, dear sir, yours very truly,
“FR. CONST.”

Some time before this, Charles Incledon importuned me to write him an evening’s entertainment with songs for his “Wandering Melodist,” which I did, premising, that as my time was valuable, I should depend on his honour for some sort of remuneration: he afterwards told me he gained many hundred pounds by the performance of this gallimathias; yet when, many months afterwards, I inquired about his intentions of payment,—he told Downton I was a Jew to ask money from a “brother performer;” and with much difficulty I got an order from him on Messrs. Goulding, to

pay me thirty pounds, for what had cost me about six weeks' hard work, and he had boasted, was instrumental in putting more than a thousand pounds in his pocket.

This season Mr. King, formerly proprietor of Sadler's Wells, acting-manager of Drury-Lane, and many years one of its first actors, retired from the stage; he was led from it, after his farewell, by Mrs. Jordan; and presented by Mr. Dowton with a splendid silver cup and salver, in token of the affection of his theatrical contemporaries; and at the end of this season, to my great sorrow, (without the slightest disrespect to the memory of his successor,) Mr. Lewis was succeeded in his long and meritorious stage management of Covent-Garden by Mr. John Kemble. It may seem going out of my way to notice theatrical occurrences of well-recorded notoriety; but Mr. King had been kind to me from my childhood, when he never would suffer me to call him any thing but "Tom King;" and of Mr. Lewis I have said enough; and if not, I shall have to say more to justify my interest in all that related to *him*.

Three-fourths of the property of Sadler's Wells being at this period to be disposed of, my brother Charles and myself purchased, conjointly,

Mr. Siddons's quarter of the theatre for the sum of fourteen hundred pounds: Mr. Reeves, the composer, bought Mr. Wroughton's eighth; Mr. Andrews, the artist, another eighth; and Messrs. Yarnold and Barfoot the quarter belonging to Mr. T. Arnold, of the First Fruits Office.

Mr. Reynolds, in his Memoirs, has spoken with great respect of the "Keep the Line" Club, of which Mr. M. P. Andrews, Captain Topham, Messrs. Morton, Reynolds, Arnold, Fawcett, Kenny, Pope, Holman, J. Johnstone, Joseph Madocks, two Messrs. Nixon, Knight, were members. My late friend Nixon, of Basinghall-street, well known at the Margravine of Anspach's parties, proposed me to the "Keep the Line" without any precommunication, or any knowledge of mine on the subject; and thus reported his success:—

"Dear Dibdin,

"At the 'Keep the Line' last night, you were proposed a member: so many to second the proposal, showed how very much we all considered you worthy to be admitted to that society. Of course, the ballot was unanimous in your favour. I hope we shall often meet

there, at the *Ad Libitum* and Literary Fund Club, as well as at my house in Basinghall-street, where you will always, &c. &c.

“ With respects to Mrs. Dibdin,

“ I am, ever yours,

“ J. NIXON.”

In the succeeding summer Mr. Harris wrote to me :—

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ Pray meet me at the theatre between one and two o'clock. I wish to speak to you on the subject of a prelude for the opening next season : pray turn your mind to such purpose.

“ Yours very truly,

T. HARRIS.”

In consequence of this I wrote a one-act piece called “ The Box Office,” which was adopted, rejected, re-adopted, and finally laid aside in favour of an address I wrote, which was honoured with complete approbation.

CHAP. XVI.

1803—1804.

“ And many other ventures he hath forth.”—*Merchant of Venice*.

New stage management at Covent-Garden—“ Raising the Wind”—“ Three per Cents”—“ Cabinet”—“ Family Quarrels”—“ English Fleet”—“ Harlequin’s Races”—“ Love gives the Alarm”—“ The Paragraph”—“ Will for the Deed”—Easter Monday—“ Valentine and Orson”—Mr. Colman—“ Guilty or not Guilty”—Fruitless negociation—Epilogues, &c. &c.

THE new stage management, and my sixth season at Covent-Garden, commenced September, 1803, with the address I had written to open the house. The first novelty was Mr. Kenny’s successful farce of “ Raising the Wind;” the next, Mr. Reynolds’s comedy called “ Three per Cents,” respecting which (the only unsuccessful play he ever produced) he has spoken with so much good-humour in his Memoirs, that I am sure he will forgive my inserting an anecdote in some degree connected with it, which I had either from himself

or Mr. Morton, and which I wonder Mr. Reynolds omitted. His next comedy was the "Blind Bargain, or Hear it Out;" and when Mr. Reynolds was crossing Hart-street with the manuscript under his coat, in order to read it to the actors, full of anxiety on account of the fate of his last play,—a restive dray-horse pranced on the pavement close by him; the driver cracked his whip at the horse, exactly in the direction of Mr. Reynolds, and exclaimed, as if speaking to him instead of the horse, "Ah, there you are, going again to *damnation*!"—an apostrophe apparently so ominous, that though it was afterwards completely belied by the great success of the comedy, yet it rang in the author's ears during the whole time he was reading.

In the preceding summer, when I was indisposed at Richmond, Mr. Reynolds wrote to request an epilogue for the "Three per Cents," apologising for not being able to allow me many days to effect it. I had the pleasure of enclosing him one by *return of the two-penny post*, and next day received this reply:—

"My dear Sir,

"I return you *many, many* thanks, and regret extremely having troubled you at a time when you are so unwell. The epilogue will

answer admirably; it is the very thing I could wish: I have no alterations to propose. Perhaps the 'squinting gentleman in blue' may be taken for M——, (don't laugh, it is a funny town!) and therefore it may be prudent to substitute the word *ugly*, or any other you think proper. I sincerely wish you better, and remain very truly yours,
"F. REYNOLDS."

The "Cabinet" and "Family Quarrels" continued to be acted alternately till the 13th of December, when I produced the opera of the "English Fleet in 1342," which completely answered the proprietor's purpose, and was acted thirty-five nights during the season. I had the usual routine of altering and re-writing songs, &c. to go through, and the part originally intended for Mr. Fawcett was played by Mr. Braham. My pantomime of "Harlequin's Races" was brought out with old scenery and machinery, and consequently proved any thing but fortunate; for which the new management was blamed, as I believe, very unjustly. Mr. Lewis did me the favour to ask a comedy from me for his benefit: I say "favour," because he stipulated, that in case of success, the theatre should pay for the play, which Mr. Harris confirmed: but being very busily employed in preparing (at

Mr. Kemble's suggestion) a melo-drame, founded on the old story of Valentine and Orson, I began to despair of finding time for Mr. Lewis's play; when that gentleman told me there would be no occasion to write it, as a comedy would be produced under the title of "Love gives the Alarm," which (there being little doubt of its success) would answer his purpose equally with that I intended to write for him. I was rejoiced to hear this, and relinquished all thoughts of writing more that season, except, on solicitation of Mr. Holman, the epilogue to the comedy in question: most unfortunately (as I at the moment imagined) for me as well as the author, "Love gives the Alarm" totally failed, and that very night Mr. Lewis informed me he must now depend on my friendship for the performance of my first intention, for which he gave me a week. I obtained ten days; at the end of which, I read to the performers, in Mr. Lewis's drawing-room, the comedy of "the Will for the Deed," having first submitted it, on account of some doubtful legal technicalities, to Mr. Const, who approved it, and actually, with the greatest kindness, wrote one speech respecting "the Will and the Deed." Sanctioned thus by the "opinion of counsel," Mr. Harris heard it had been

well received at the reading, and asked to see it: he read only the first act, in which he affirmed the incident of the red-hot poker would damn any play or farce, let the author be who he would. Mr. Lewis replied, that the success of the incident would a little depend on *who handled* the poker; and that was to be himself. Mr. Harris rejoined, that if the play succeeded, (which he much feared) he would pay handsomely for it, and left the event to chance.

On the night of representation, Mr. Harris went to his box, and sent for me: he had very seldom witnessed a first night's performance for many years, and I considered this attention as no trifling compliment. I had written both prologue and epilogue; as, with the exception of two instances, wherein Mr. Colman had assisted me, I, who always wrote for others, was ever obliged to work for myself. The prologue was so well received, that Mr. Harris said he foresaw the play would be a hit; and when the curtain dropped at the end of it, he added, "Dibdin, you may ask the treasurer for £300; two for the play, and one for the copy-right;" and as Mr. Barker volunteered £120 for the copy, Mr. Harris, to retain it, added twenty to the three hundred. Mr. Lewis had a great

house, and felt as much gratification in my success as he did in his own.

This happened the Saturday before Passion Week, and on Easter Monday I produced "Valentine and Orson," which was performed with my "Horse and Widow," and "Will for the Deed;" so that, as indeed was frequently the case, I had the whole play-bill to myself: the melo-drame was eminently successful. Mr. Farley had been most indefatigable in his assistance in the stage arrangement of this piece, and I have letters of Mr. Harris to prove that he attached great value to its brilliant reception. Though produced so late in the season, it was acted forty-five nights.

Among these bustling avocations, I found time to write a five-act comedy, which Mr. Harris having declined, Mr. Fawcett informed me might probably be very acceptable to Mr. Colman, to whom (having obtained Mr. Harris's permission to send it) it was given by Mr. Fawcett, and immediately accepted. Fearful of risk upon ground so new to me as the Haymarket, (where, it being the first season of Mr. Colman's attempting to form a company independent of the London theatres, the performers, however talented, were almost entirely strangers

to the town,) I wrote to Mr. Colman the following preliminary and important requests ;—first, to be insured £200, instead of risking benefit nights ; secondly, that Mr. Harris, if he wished it, might, in case of success, act the play a few nights in the winter ; and, thirdly, that Mr. Colman would dine with me on ratification of the said preliminaries. *Voilà la réponse* :—

“ Dear Sir,

“ Your letter has reached me this evening in the country : the play shall go to Covent-Garden, should you wish it, as often as you please ; you shall have £200 to a certainty ; and I will have the pleasure of dining with you and Mrs. Dibdin any early day you fix in the ensuing week. I defy any Change-alley correspondent to send a clearer answer to your epistle : it is the jog-trot of precision, mounted on the back of business. Now let me get on my favourite hobby-horse, freedom, and give you a few comments in a canter. In the first place, I deny the truth of your distich.* *Your* play (particularly when I have a hope of future

* I had said, that as to the play,—

The intrinsic value of a thing
Is just as much as it will bring.

assistance from you) is to me worth *more* than it will bring; and if I should chance to make some lucky hits during the summer, we must talk of further remuneration; if I should not, *tant pis pour vous et pour moi*. Mine, I confess, is a paltry market; but, to those who can furnish me with meat, I wish to offer the best price my shambles can afford. As to taking the play to Covent-Garden, if Mr. Harris had requested it, I should (with your permission) have sent him a copy directly, for I owe *him* every attention; therefore you are not indebted to me the mere ghost of a thankye on this head. On one point I think you totally wrong:—you say, when we meet like mere men of business to talk about money, we shall encounter *long faces*: on the contrary, if length of visage implies dissentient, I shall come to you with a most circular countenance: I shall meet you like a full moon. Many thanks for your present, which promises entertainment. [I have no recollection what this present could be.] As you told me it contained a panegyric upon me, I wished to be impartial; therefore I read a story first, and the eulogy afterwards: the story, and the mode of telling it, pleased me much: and, after this act of forbearance, I turned to the praise on myself. I need not tell you how this operated: conceal

it as we will, even from ourselves, we are all sons of vanity.

“ Adieu! yours very truly,
“ G. COLMAN.”

I also received from Messrs. Lackington and Co. £100 for the copy-right of this comedy: my receipts, therefore, this year, independently of Mrs. Dibdin's salary and benefit, were—

	£.	s.	d.
“ English Fleet”*	550	0	0
Cleared by song-books	60	0	0
“ Will for Deed,” and copy	320	0	0
My salary	260	0	0
“ Guilty or not Guilty ”	200	0	0
Copy-right	100	0	0
Songs of Pantomime	10	0	0
“ Valentine and Orson ”	15	0	0
	£1515	0	0

The latter piece I published on my own account; as bad a plan as pleading one's own law cause: there are secrets in all trades.

Before I parted with the copy-right of “ Guilty or not Guilty,” I had, conformably to a custom at Covent-Garden, tendered it to Mr. Colman, who coupling it with his answer to some en-

* Mr. Braham sold the copy-right of his music for 1000 guineas.

deavours I had made in behalf of brother Cecil, thus replies :—

“ With this scrawl, my dear Sir, you will receive the manuscripts belonging to Mr. Cecil Pitt. When you put them into his hands, pray take the trouble of saying every thing for me which may soften so unpleasant a return. *A-propos* of manuscripts: let me talk of one which ranks high in my opinion. It never occurred to me, till this morning, to tell you that the slender finances of my theatre are so tightly pinched by a trust-deed, (like a thin man in a straight waistcoat,) that I am not able to offer any sum which I should not be ashamed of proposing to you for the copy-right of your comedy. I mention my inability of meeting your merits in this instance, that you may not lose your tide with the booksellers. It is not customary, I believe, to publish immediately on the production of a comedy; but I am sulky with fortune for disabling me to do what I wish, in this particular: your doing the best you can for yourself directly may restore me to good-humour with the hussy. I will freely give you my sentiments relative to yourself. It is the policy of my theatre to court a continuance of your assistance, although I generally slight policy;

it is either above *me*, or I am above *it*: but I have a mighty gratification in proving to talent I am doing my best for it. My feeling, therefore, in your instance, is somewhat unusual with me; for my policy and pleasure will go hand in hand. I enclose Mr. Cecil Pitt a card of admission.

“ Yours, my dear Sir, very sincerely,
“ G. COLMAN.”

I have omitted some still kinder expressions of Mr. Colman; and should I be censured for inserting what I have, I will not deny the fair pride I felt at the approval of such a judge,—quite a disinterested one, as I think I shall hereafter prove; or if at all interested, that very circumstance makes it more flattering in a professional point of view.

Should Mr. Colman himself feel momentary displeasure at my proclaiming his good-humoured liberality, I shall meet him with his own words, in conclusion of a foregoing letter,—“ Conceal it as we will, even from our ourselves, we are all sons of vanity.” As a proof that there was nothing superficial in his professions of regard, Mr. Colman, at my request, engaged the wife of brother Cecil the next season at the Haymarket at four pounds per week; and the husband being placed as an author and musician

at Astley's, the family were for a time very comfortably settled in London, the eldest daughter still remaining with us, and my parting promise at Margate still held in remembrance.

I had now laid out a considerable sum on furniture, books, pictures, &c. and, jointly with my brother, (as before mentioned,) made a purchase of Mr. Siddons's quarter of Sadler's Wells Theatre, for which we paid fourteen hundred pounds; and when, in the following December, I was applied to, to become a fourth part proprietor of the Theatre-Royal Haymarket, my evil genius ordained that in this instance, in consequence of acting with perfect propriety and prudence, I should miss an opportunity of seizing that

Tide in the affairs of man,
Which, taken at the full, leads on to fortune;
But once ———

And I did let it go by, for these reasons: the price of the quarter was £4000, of which (in consequence of late purchases) I had to borrow nearly two; and there were innumerable hints given that the property would be placed in Chancery. Had all the purchase-money required been my own, I should, beyond a doubt, have been inclined to run the risk; but the alarm sounded in my

ears, particularly by Mr. Harris, and the long delays which intervened from day to day, before any thing like positive settlement could be obtained, (after I had placed upwards of £4000 in the hands of Messrs. Drummonds, where it lay four months without producing a shilling interest,) led me to consult a legal friend, often mentioned in this magnificent history, who seriously advised me not to buy. Some following pages will contain part of the correspondence respecting the intended purchase.

Mr. Morris had first made application to me on the subject, and afterwards brought me this credential from Mr. Colman: —

December 31, 1804.

“ My dear Sir,

“ I write one hasty line, which our friend Morris will put into your hands. I hope the pleasure of seeing you very soon; in the mean time, there is nothing which Morris has to arrange with you which I will not ratify. I shall be most happy in the coadjutors I have in expectancy.

“ Truly yours,

“ G. COLMAN.”

Mr. Winston having heard of the negotiation, wrote to ask me if he might not have “ a slice,”

as he expressed it, of the concern : I immediately presented the letter to Mr. Colman, who declined other partnership than with Mr. Morris and myself. To render the purchase of real value, Mr. Colman drew up a memorial, which was presented to His late Majesty, humbly soliciting that the names of David Morris and Thomas Dibdin might be added to that of Mr. Colman, and that the annual license, which was understood to be for Mr. Colman's life, should be extended to our lives also ; which was graciously acceded to.

Still the busy-bodies of the day were every where whispering, and hinting, and pointing out dangers ; and still unfortunately the procrastinations, so natural to lawyers, kept matters undecided, and occasioned those whispers and hints, (most of which I have since had reason to believe were not quite so disinterested as they professed to be) which, on the other hand, were counteracted by the evident fairness of Mr. Colman's intentions. I am anticipating part of next year's memoir by giving the remainder of this circumstance ; but wish to conclude the relation of it at once, and exhibit the openness of Mr. Colman contrasted with my own over-scrupulous (I was almost going to call it) infatuation.

In answer to my fears of Chancery, Mr. Colman says—

“My dear Dibdin,

“Morris has decided to indemnify you from any loss attending an application to Chancery. Pray see Fladgate directly, for time presses, and it is highly necessary we should make up our mind immediately. How could you, my good friend! take it into your head for a moment that I might be angry? you are only wishing to do what I have uniformly expressed my desire and intention of seeing effected for you; and you will do me the justice to remember that I have over and over again declared your safety was a leading object with me. Fladgate has just told me, since I called on you, that when he saw you this morning, he had found you still not averse from the bargain, if risk and expense on your part could be avoided. We are to see Mr. Const on this subject to-day, and I am in hopes we may still be together in the Haymarket; but this depends, in great measure, on what Morris thinks it worth while to incur. I hope I need not tell you how happy I shall be in a co-partnership with you, in preference to any other, for you are the most unaffected dramatist I have ever met with; and it is as unnecessary perhaps to add, that whatever turn this matter may eventually take, it will not, in the smallest degree, diminish my sincere esteem and regard

for you. Best regards to Mrs. D. Yours, (as you perceive, in a devil of a hurry,) ever and truly,

“G. COLMAN.”

In a subsequent letter he says—

“My dear Dibdin,

“I expected something like the note I have received from you. If, on your going to town, you consulted —, and missed seeing Fladgate, you have lost a plain statement of circumstances in one case, and I know how far the systematical wisdom of professional indecision may operate in the other upon any mind, where previous pains have been taken to mould it to a quick reception of alarm. Again, again, and again, let me repeat to you, (I cannot repeat it too often,) that in every stage of this tiresome business I have professed my wish and intention to see you secure, even if you choose to hazard your own interests. Although this care seem to be unnecessary on my part, from the prudence on yours,—still let me, in justice to myself, persevere in stating the fact; and when I have, throughout, manifested this consideration, something is due to me in return.”

In conclusion.

“ My dear Dibdin,

“ Yours of yesterday evening reached me after dinner to-day, in *undue* course, agreeably to the *non* regulations of a cockney country post. You are very kind and attentive in removing the suspenses of a poor devil labouring under the tyranny of his blue brethren. With respect to ———, let him and I greet each other by attorney, whereby I have a manifest advantage; for my Hyperion (Mr. Fladgate) meets his mummy. One consideration which cheers me in my new arrangements, is yourself: I am connecting my interests with those of good sense, industry, and genius; and with one whose unaffected manners, &c. &c. Why do we not see you both, now your opera is finished? are you twaddlers, waiting for an invitation? or are you lazy? or do you dread going out of town this weather? Tell Mrs. D. we have some famous logs and coals. Do as you like, for, if you come, you will let me do as I like; and I shall be **VERY** happy to see you. Your brother Charles's loss (the death of a fine infant) seems to me a relief from misery for a child and its parents. My alarms increase for little Edmund, whose cough

has not yielded to medicine. You have no right to complain of my tediousness in this letter ; for if I did not fill the paper, you would say I had wasted it ;* but perhaps you may say that, as it is.

“ G. COLMAN.”

A few days afterwards, things again (entirely through the law's delay) took a different turn. Among others, Mr. Harris, who had lent me five hundred pounds towards the purchase, called on me, and expressed so much uneasiness about my adventure—that I withdrew my account from Drummonds, repaid my friends all their money, and soon after found a speculation in which to get rid of my own. As Mr. Winston had applied, as before noticed, I was now desired to intimate to him there was an opening for negotiation : which I did, and he and Mr. Tahourdin (through my introduction) jointly purchased the share I was in treaty for, Mr. Colman and myself remaining as good friends as ever ;—my only consolation, during subsequent regrets, for having carefully saved, as I imagined, the money destined (as Ranger says) “ to be laid out on a wrong bottom at last.”

* It had often been observed by Mr. Colman that I was avaricious of nothing but writing-paper.

In extenuation of my failure in this treaty, I must add, that had Mr. Colman alone been the proposed partner, I should most certainly have stepped over all threatened obstacles; but there was to have been, from another quarter, an *imperium in imperio* in the concern, which, however apparently justified by circumstance, I could never have brought myself to submit to. From theatrical arrangements talked of, in contemplation of our partnership, it got abroad that the salaries of the Haymarket were to be generally lowered, old servants dismissed, and many other unpopular measures to be pursued, which, in decided terms, some publications attributed to me. Alas! they

knew little of Calista!

After events at the Surrey Theatre form a sufficient refutation. That just economy should be tried at the Haymarket, was indeed our joint intention; but extremes were never mentioned in my hearing; and if intended, the credit of the idea must be due in some other quarter.

In the summer, Mr. Reynolds wrote me—

“My dear Sir,

“Will you once again try your hand for an epilogue? I shall be extremely obliged to you. Hill is using the copy of the comedy, or I

would send it to you ; but, in my mind, the less the epilogue relates to the play the better ; they will have had enough of the character, story, &c. without wishing for any more of it ; and most of Andrews's epilogues to my plays have been written without his seeing the manuscript. The fact is, I am sure it won't help you. The name of the play is 'Hear it out ;' and what I wish, is an epilogue song for Emery, who plays a countryman called Giles Woodbine : he is supposed to have been to London to see sights ; and in the opening of his character, he describes what he saw, and what happened to him there ; but he don't describe the towns he saw in his way hither and back, and this, I think, (if you coincide with me) may be tolerable good ground for an epilogue. For instance, he saw York ; the Races ; Female Jockey ; a husband there parted from his wife on finding a pair of boots and leather breeches (or pantaloons) in her chamber, when it turns out they belong to Lady Curricule ; and that she was the wife's bedfellow, and not a man. He may see Birmingham, and the play, and the young Roscius ; but be careful and remember he is engaged next season at Covent-Garden. He may go to Margate in the Hoy ; see masquerades in libraries ; thought to raffle, but found auctions instead ; ridicule the impropriety of so little de-

corum as to the situation of bathing-machines : let him get by mistake into a wrong one, whence he is kicked out by some amphibious Martha Gun sort of a guide ; or let him go to Weymouth, and see the king ; or to Dover, and hear the bombardment ; or to Bath, and see—what you please. If possible, make some allusions to dress ; and pointing out people among the audience ; as ‘ I saw you with the &c. coat, at York ; ’—also some allusions to the title, ‘ Hear it out.’ As to the tune, any one you please : I thought of the ‘ Belleisle March,’ but perhaps that is not sufficiently comic : perhaps it would be better to write the words, and get Reeve, or some other composer, to set them ; but this as you like. I only say, you will very much oblige me by undertaking it.

“ Believe me very truly yours,

“ F. REYNOLDS.”

“ P.S. The play is to be read to-morrow se’n-night ; so I hope I shall shortly have the pleasure of hearing from you.”

I believe Mr. Reynolds had the epilogue in the course of the ensuing day, or the next at farthest : Mr. Emery sang it ; to which cause, aided by very high good-humour the audience were already in at the close of the comedy, may

be attributed the applause with which this lyrical attempt was received the usual number of nights.

Independently of prologues and epilogues, I had a vast deal of other gratuitous business on my hands during the past season and present summer, in the shapes of addresses, comic songs, &c. &c. for actors in town and country, until I began to think I ought to set some value on my time; but all was sun-shine, and, as Dickey Suett used to say, "I could not find in my heart" to do what, after all, I do not regret I did not do. I must not forget to state, on the other hand, that for some songs and other matters written for a grand *fête* given by the Knights of the Bath, I was, through the medium of Mr. Fawcett, remunerated.

Mr. Morton had a play in preparation, for which Mr. Harris sent to me to write an epilogue, to be spoken by several characters; but Mr. Lewis, who had much to do in it, declined appearing in the epilogue after I had written it, and it had been approved; and (as will appear from Mr. Kemble's subjoined note) I had all my work to do over again:—

"My dear Sir,

"If Mr. Hill had brought me word that

you were in town, I should have done myself the pleasure of calling on you instead of writing. Mr. Lewis says that it is absolutely impossible for him to undertake the studying of his part of the epilogue you have been so kind as to furnish to Mr. Morton's comedy. Will you, my dear sir! add to the obligations we have to you, by giving the verses such a turn as that Mrs. Litchfield may speak them, without any other character being employed?" [No easy matter, looking at the difference of style between the two performers; but this may serve to prove what kind of trouble I had in producing my operas] "for I foresee (continues Mr. Kemble) as much difficulty from Mr. Emery as Mr. Lewis; but that is between ourselves. I presume to make very unreasonable requests to your Muse, but I know how complying she is to you, and shall rest contented and happy about our new play, if you will give me the satisfaction of letting me know that I may expect the epilogue in the course of to-morrow.

"Begging a thousand excuses for the trouble I am giving you, I remain, my dear sir, yours truly,

"J. KEMBLE.

No. 89, Great Russell-street,
Bloomsbury-square.

The epilogue was sent, and thus acknowledged:—

“ My dear Sir,

“ Mr. Morton will be with you on the subject of the epilogue. Believe how much I am obliged by the trouble you have given yourself, and that I am always yours,

“ J. P. KEMBLE.”

Theatre.

I, who, with all my impudence, am all nerve and apprehension where my pen is concerned, have once or twice anticipated that cavillers, or reasonable people (if you will) may say,—
“ This Mr. Tom Dibdin gives us nothing but letters!”—I confess it; nay, as Reynolds says in the Dramatist,—

I glory in my ignorance—in my vices,—

if ignorance or vice it be to corroborate the main points of this bold biography from testimonials of the first professional rank in worth and merit, as I before took the liberty of saying, when perhaps too minute on circumstances attending the interesting period of my marriage. You are in raptures with these descriptions in a romance, where the incidents portrayed never happened: so also in a novel, you read the

letters of imaginary heroes and heroines with respectful attention; and if I, in producing genuine and honourable testimonies, which will afford, to many, that undefinable sort of pleasure we feel at reading *in puris naturalibus* what certain men of public notoriety actually would say or write on such and such occasions, am thought to blame, I can only be sorry: I never lose early impressions. I remember, when a boy, following John Palmer and Charles Bannister all the way from Goodman's-fields to Covent-Garden, merely for the pleasure of being near such men; and though the "drunkard might make them gods," I don't think the feeling was unnatural; and if, after that, my having lived to receive letters, and such letters, from such people as have already been named, and are hereafter to come upon the *tapis* in my next volume,—be not enough to bewilder a body a little, and plead his excuse,—why I pity those who won't accept it. I never was inconstant in my attachments; and, in spite of all my labours and all my reverses, my heart and inclinations are as completely theatrical as when I first sang "Poor Jack"

On board of a Margate hoy.

CHAP. XVII.

1804—5—6—7.

“Vogue la Galère.”—*Old French Song.*

Seventh campaign at Covent-Garden—Master Betty—
 “Thirty Thousand”—“Harlequin Quicksilver”—“School
 of Reform”—“Who wants a Guinea?”—“Aggression”—
 “Personation”—Jack Johnstone—The late member for
 Stamford, and our old friend Sir William—Rise of salary—
 Eighth campaign—“Nelson’s Glory”—“White Plume”—
 —“Five Miles Off”—Mr. Kean—Trip to the West—
 “Mother Goose”—“Miseries of Human Life”—Ninth
 campaign—Dreadful accident at Sadler’s Wells—More of
 Sir William.

TRIUMPHANTLY successful was the first new
 piece of 1804-5 at Covent-Garden: the “Blind
 Bargain” remedied all deficiencies in the “Three
 per Cents,” and stocks were up again. I was
 proud to see its first appearance accompanied by
 my “Il Bondocani:” “Valentine and Orson”
 resumed its run: “the English Fleet,” “the
 Will for the Deed,” “the Cabinet,” “Family
 Quarrels,” and “the Jew and the Doctor,” were

again frequently performed. On the first of December, a new planet in the theatrical hemisphere was discovered in Master Betty; or rather a comet, in whose train all that were fashionable or unfashionable, learned or ignorant, saints or sinners, were nightly to be seen.

On the day of Master Betty's first appearance, a small party of us dined in Mrs. Dibdin's dressing-room at the theatre, and then went together, and paid for admission at the pit door: Mrs. Mattocks, Mr. Emery, Mr. Farley, Mr. Braham, Madame Storace, and, I believe, Mr. and Mrs. Litchfield, with Mrs. Sparkes Powell, and some others, were of the number: the immense crowd will be long recollected; and how people were pulled out of the pit into the boxes fainting, principally men; and how Townsend the officer was obliged to faint away himself in the midst of a *brouillerie* in the boxes to get safe out of the *mêlée*: at last, our party was attacked; the good folks in the pit called out "actors!" and said we had not paid. I was delighted with the compliment, being allowed the distinction of being an "actor," as well as the rest; but was less pleased when the liberal and enlightened public began, in no mild accents, to invite each other to eject us from our purchased places; or, in other words, vociferated "Turn 'em out!"

We then all manfully stood up, women included. Many of the really liberal public, who had seen us pay, voluntarily joined in defending our rights, and the affair ended by our getting three rounds of applause.

The next novelty I presented was an opera in three acts, produced in December under the title of “Thirty Thousand, or Who’s the Richest?” partly founded on a tale by Miss Edgeworth, the music by Braham, Davy, and Reeve; and though not so successful as the “Cabinet” or “English Fleet,” it answered Mr. Harris’s expectations extremely well: he gave me three hundred guineas for it, and I sold the copy-right to Barker for sixty more. This was succeeded by my pantomime of “Harlequin Quicksilver, or the Gnome and the Devil;” which was more than usually fortunate: His Majesty honoured it with a command, as well as the new opera; and again commanded “the English Fleet,” and “the Birthday,” each of which he had many times seen before. “Il Bondocani,” and several other of my by-gones, were again brought into action this year. The comedy of the “School of Reform,” by Mr. Morton; “Too many Cooks,” a farce by Mr. Kenny; and “To Marry or not to Marry,” a comedy in five acts, by Mrs. Inchbald,—were all received with *éclat*, and followed

by Mr. Colman's comedy of "Who wants a Guinea?" prior to the appearance of which, Mr. Lewis wrote to me to Rochester, where we were on a visit to Mrs. Baker:—

Saturday, March 30th, 1805.

"Dear Dibdin,

"I am requested by Mr. Colman, who has given me the commission only because he has not time to write a line but what relates to his comedy,—to say that it is announced for Thursday next, by the title of 'Where is She? or the Benevolent Quixote;' (afterwards altered to 'Who wants a Guinea?') and that his dependence is placed on your good-nature, at this short notice, for prologue and epilogue. You know how urgent the occasion is; but, as I have much to do in the play, you must make no use of me in either: possibly Mrs. Mattocks, as a house-keeper, might afford a theme, where she has lived so many years: what visitants she has had, male, female, actors, singers; what commodities she has had in one *box*, what in another; something in the cellar (pit) and garret (gallery). Pardon this nonsense: and, wishing you and your genius much success, believe me, dear Dibdin,

"Yours sincerely,

"WM. THO. LEWIS."

Of course I wrote, and sent them to time, the prologue for Mr. Brunton, the epilogue for Mrs. Mattocks, each of whom did great credit to what little opportunities were afforded them. I wrote the songs, also, for Mr. Farley's melodrame of "Aggression;" and Mr. Bannister requested me to alter a French piece for his benefit, under the title of "Personation," which I did, and wrote a prologue, with (by desire) every word ending in *ation*. This farce has been often repeated, and of course cannot be the piece published from the pen of a lady who performed in it. I do not know what alterations or additions might have been made to the one just named after it left my hands, as I never saw the piece represented; but I know Mr. Bannister expressed himself satisfied with what I had done, and in consequence played for my wife's benefit at Richmond soon after.

About benefit time at Covent-Garden, I had the following whimsical note from Mr. John Johnstone on the subject of a song I had promised to write for his night; it begins thus:—

"Now you know all,

"But that I shall be miserable till I have the song: I have the worst study on earth;

and shall have a nervous fever, unless you will administer the dose I have entreated you to mix up for

“ Your obliged and most sincere

“ J. JOHNSTONE.

Thursday, 30th April, 5, Tavistock-row.

“ For God's sake, do not neglect my request.”

The following from the late Evan Foulkes, M.P. for Stamford, will show that those frequent calls on my poor Muse were not confined to the theatre: in fact, I had scarcely a convivial acquaintance who had not a wish for a birth-day ditty, a wedding epithalamium, or a house-warming song, and relied on my “ known readiness,” &c. &c. to accommodate:—

“ Dear Sir,

“ I have sent you the book that contains the story I alluded to yesterday, and a brace of pheasants, which you will present to Mrs. Dibdin with my compliments. As you have a peculiar felicity of adapting the effusions of your Muse to particular occasions, I am induced to state that the story in question is familiar to every child in Stamford; that the influence of the Exeter family has for some

years returned the two members for that town, and one for Rutland; that I have the superintendence of affairs, and am one of the guardians of the present marquess. At the mayor's feast, on his entering into office, the head of Burghley-house has always dined with the corporation: the trustees (of whom I am one) have, since the late lord's death, always attended; and as it has been the fashion to sing jovial songs, I have contributed my indifferent mite. This year I gave them your 'Dido,' with which they were highly delighted; and if you will, at your perfect leisure, convert the story in question into a song, and throw in some compliments to the mayor and corporation, the antiquity of Stamford, and the respect entertained for it by the descendants of the house of Burghley,—I am persuaded it will be highly popular, and you will add to the many obligations you have conferred on,

“ Dear sir, yours very sincerely,

“ EVAN FOULKES.”

Southampton-street, Thursday morning.

The “Dido,” here mentioned, was my probationary song when elected poet laureat of the *Ad Libitum* Beef-Steaks: my old master Sir William also became enamoured of “Dido,” as

will hereafter appear in due order of chronology.

I had now completed seven seasons at Covent-Garden to the handsomely-expressed satisfaction of the proprietors, Mr. Harris in particular; and having thus as it were served my time out faithfully, (much more so than I had done with Sir William,) I wrote to Mr. Harris, requesting an advance of one pound per week salary for myself, and one pound additional per week for my wife: my salary would then be six pounds weekly through the year; Mrs. Dibdin's four pounds, playhouse pay, as it is technically termed; which means four pounds for every week of six nights on which the theatre is open, or rather 13*s.* 4*d.* every play-night through the season: this request was instantly acceded to; and, I believe, I voluntarily promised not to ask for another rise till I had seen out another seven years. I ought not to omit stating, that Sadler's Wells was fast repaying its own purchase-money.

Under these happy auspices, I commenced my eighth campaign at Covent-Garden, with the season 1805-6. Mr. M. G. Lewis led the way in the list of novelty, by bringing out his well-remembered "Rugantino," which, on the 7th of November, I followed by a one-act sketch, writ-

ten in a day, on the occasion of the memorable naval victory off Trafalgar. The performers, in consequence of the few hours allowed in which to produce the piece, were generally indulged, by permission, to read their parts publicly: the occasion ensured this flimsy drama a good reception: it was acted nine nights.

A curious circumstance occurred on the first night of "Nelson's Glory," at my house in Charlotte-street, Fitzroy-square. I had a friend on a visit, who had particular reasons (known only to John Doe and his partner Richard) for remaining a few days in strict *incognito*: he had been watched, and his abode was half suspected to be with me. At night a mob paraded the streets, breaking every window which did not happen to be illuminated in celebration of the gallant Nelson's victory. My wife and I were at the theatre; and our friend, on the approach of the "Light Company," who were vociferating for illumination, forgetful of his own safety, and concerned only for the danger our windows might be in, deliberately presented himself at the most conspicuous one with a tall candle in each hand, and remained there till the house was completely lighted up.

Mr. Reynolds came, next in order, with his comedy of "the Delinquent, or Seeing Com-

pany;" at the foot of which, I had the honour to place my pantomime of "Harlequin's Magnet, or the Scandinavian Sorcerer;" which, according to green-room phrase, hit very hard, and I believe realised its first title. Mr. Colman, under the *nom de guerre* of Arthur Griffinhoof, Esq. brought out an operatic farce, under the title of "We Fly by Night, or Long Stories;" which proved as laughably effective as the author's stories invariably are. Mr. Cumberland followed with his "Hint to Husbands,"—a five-act comedy, acted six nights; and I wish I could say I succeeded with the ensuing novelty,—an opera in three acts, the music by Reeve, called the "White Plume," which proved no feather in my cap, being acted six nights, and then cut down to a farce, and played three more. I must, without seeking a *salvo* for hurt vanity, affirm that this partial failure should be leniently considered, when it is recollected that Miss Searle was the principal female singer in this opera, and, though supported by Miss Tyrer (now Mrs. Liston), the piece could not be supposed to produce much vocal effect where we had been in the habit of seeing Signora Storace and Mrs. Billington. I however had the pleasure of seeing the "Cabinet" and "English Fleet" (like "Poor Jack") often and attractively repeated during this

season, although deprived of the great talents of Braham and Storace, who had left Covent-Garden. Mr. Harris gave me two hundred pounds for the "White Plume," which remains unpublished. A tragedy called "Edgar," acted three nights, closed the line of novelty, if we except "Maids and Bachelors," a comedy played only on the benefit night of Mrs. Mattocks.

In the summer Mr. Colman applied to me for a three-act comedy; and as a balance for the black cloud which had hung over the "White Plume," I had the happiness of presenting him with the play of "Five Miles Off, or the Finger Post;" which, though not produced till the ninth of July, 1806, was performed thirty-five nights during the very short remainder of the Hay-market season. I again made a previous bargain to be insured in the sum of two hundred pounds, hit or miss, and not to run the risk of three benefits, which, under the influence of a July sun, would have been very precarious indeed. *Mau-*
gre the weather, however, the profits of my nights amounted to two hundred and seventy-five pounds, when Mr. Colman (who most liberally and laughingly said he did not scruple breaking an agreement made in his own favour to serve a friend) most liberally sent me the

above-named whole sum, instead of the bare two hundred pounds my own bargain entitled me to. I sold the copy-right of "Five Miles Off" to Barker for one hundred pounds. I must not forget a very important incident relative to my little comedy ;—Mr. Kean played a countryman in it : he had very few words to say, but he heard me remark at the time, publicly, how well those few words were said. I should not have remembered this afterwards, but when Mr. Kean made his *début* at New Drury-Lane when I was prompter, he reminded me himself of the circumstance.

In the autumn, Mr. Farley and a friend accompanied us on a very pleasant week's visit to our very jovial family connexions at Bath, Warminster, Sherborne, Stourhead, Frome, &c. The time went rapidly ; and though we had a desperately dangerous overturn at Hammersmith on our way home, we were providentially very little the worse for it.

During the last season at Covent-Garden, something not exactly to my taste had occurred during my very close attentions to the various preparations of my pantomime of "Harlequin Magnet," which induced me, with every feeling of respect and kindness, to solicit Mr. Harris for a change in the nature of my engagement, cal-

culated to free me from the further drudgery of constructing pantomimes,—a species of entertainment evidently growing unpopular with the head of the stage management, and therefore (as I some years after experienced in another theatre) very unsafe for the interests of the author. Whether right or wrong in my request, I succeeded in it, on condition of writing a farce instead of a pantomime; and passed my summer free from the everlasting dream of traps, flaps, daggers of lath, and parti-coloured jackets. During eight years I had been at Covent-Garden, the pantomime usually took five or six months preparation; and I now observed, with some degree of wonder, during my usual summer visits to the theatre, no “note of preparation,” no magic “armourers accomplishing the knights” of trip and leap; and was still more surprised, (nay, astonished, and not a little vexed into the bargain) when, not more than six weeks before Christmas, Mr. Harris knocked at my door, and returned the compliments of the day with—“Well, my dear Dibdin! we cannot do without a pantomime from you, after all.” I was thunder-struck.—“From me, sir? a pantomime, and to be acted in six weeks? it is impossible.—I grant I might write one; but how is its scenery to be painted? what

time for machinery, practice, composing the music, &c. &c.?"—"Well, but have not you some sketches by you?"—"Yes, sir, I have shown them to you often; and strongly recommended one in particular, which you have for five years refused."—"O, what? that d—d Mother Goose, whom you are so wedded to! let's look at her again: she has one recommendation; there is no finery about her; and the scenery, in general, is too common-place to take up much time: so, e'en set every body to work: I need not again see the manuscript. I will speak to Farley, and you must lose no time."—"But, sir, our late agreement, and the difficulties thrown in my way,——"—"You are too good a fellow to talk about agreements when I want you to do me a service; and as for difficulties, you shan't meet with any: I won't suffer it. Here, (giving me his *whole* hand) call every body about you, and order every thing you like: I cannot expect you to effect much, especially with such a subject; but do the best you can."

It is not quite foreign to this subject, to relate here, by way of melancholy parenthesis, that my brother Charles and myself were just closing a most unfortunate speculation we had jointly embarked in, by taking Astley's Amphitheatre in Peter-street, Dublin; where, although we had

as great a combination of burletta and pantomimic talent as ever met in a minor theatre, we lost between one and two thousand pounds. In repeating what I have said of our Dublin company, I need only add, Mr. Grimaldi (*ex pede Herculem*) was our clown at twelve pounds per week, and travelling expenses; and every department supported with equal merit in its line. I had often pressed Mr. Harris to engage Mr. Grimaldi for my pantomimes; but his answer was, that he would not be the first to infringe an agreement made between Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden, not to engage each other's performers until a twelvemonth had elapsed since such performers had left their situations. Grimaldi, by going in our venture to Dublin, had now dissolved this obstacle; and I one day met him at the stage-door of Covent-Garden, waiting, as he told me, to see Mr. Shotter, a confidential servant of Mr. Harris, who would take up his name to the proprietor: he also told me what terms he meant to ask for three years, which were so very modest, and so much beneath his value, that I went immediately to Mr. Harris, and advised him to offer a pound per week the first year, two the second, and three the third, more than the sum Mr. Grimaldi had mentioned: this was done instantaneously; and the

best clown ever seen on the stage was retained for "Mother Goose:" when I say the best, I do not except his father, whose *vis comica* I perfectly well remember. Our last three pantomimes had suffered much for want of a good clown: Delpini, Dubois, and Bologna senior, were all on the decline; and Farley had been obliged to undertake a sort of clown himself in his capital pantomime of "the Magic Oak." The acquisition of Mr. Grimaldi gave us a little more spirit for the undertaking we had in hand, and which, with the indefatigable aid of Mr. Farley, was so luckily completed; although, strange to say! Mr. Harris never came but to one rehearsal. He who was heretofore never absent a moment from a favourite pantomime, had so little hope of the one now preparing under so much disadvantage, that on the Sunday night only (I grieve to name it; but the theatre having been open all the week, we could not get possession of the stage, to try machinery, and light up scenes, on any other evening,) previous to its production, our good master, accompanied only by Mr. John Kemble, with whom he had dined, honoured us with his presence for nearly an hour. Both gentlemen seemed in excellent spirits, and not at all under the influence of much anxiety respecting the fate of a piece which was

ultimately destined to put many thousand pounds into their pockets ;—I believe more, rather than less, than twenty.

Mr. Boaden, in his “Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons,” records, as a remarkable circumstance, that this fortunate pantomime was performed fifty nights: the fact is, it was acted seventy-three nights, with the intervention of only the first night of Mr. Morton’s comedy of “Town and Country;” the pantomime was then resumed; and in the same season attained its ninety-second night: nineteen additional representations in the following season, before Christmas, amounted to one hundred and eleven nights prior to the production of the next year’s pantomime; a run unprecedented even with Rich’s far-famed pantomime of “Harlequin Sorcerer.” Again it was reproduced at the Haymarket, after Covent-Garden had been burnt, and experienced a very successful third run. Yet, from Mr. Harris, who had always rejected it, I never, on its success, met the usual cheering clap on the back, even when the piece was established, and had become the constant talk of the town, though his kindness and liberality, in all other respects, rather increased than abated. Too much cannot be repeated of Mr. Farley’s firm and close adherence and assistance throughout the whole of this pantomime. My dear

mother used to be very fond of repeating, "I respect Farley, because he is so good to his mother;" and, I believe, a more exemplary son (to the last moments of a parent's life, long, and, through his affectionate and dutiful attentions, happily extended) never did honour to the land we live in.

I come now to my ninth campaign of Covent-Garden,—that of 1806-7; in which, (except seeing many of my former pieces acted) a farce I wrote for Mr. Fawcett's benefit, called "The Miseries of Human Life," constituted nearly my whole season's work, without mentioning a prologue to Miss Chambers's comedy of "The School for Friends" at Drury-Lane. Mr. Dimond's "Adrian and Orrila;"—Mr. Reynolds's "Deserts of Arabia," and "Arbitration;"—Mr. Morton's "Town and Country;" an Honourable Gentleman's "Whistle for it;"—nobody's "Ogre and Little Thumb," which was triumphantly and falsely attributed to me by "the News;" and Mr. Cherry's "Peter the Great,"—were the novelties which divided the palm with my "village sorceress," and added to the "golden eggs" of the season.

A most dreadful accident happened to us at Sadler's Wells towards the close of the season of 1807. An outrage committed by a pickpocket

in the pit occasioned the cry of "Fight!" which being imperfectly heard in the gallery and boxes, was misconstrued into the dreadful monosyllable "Fire!" The gallery spectators rose *en masse*, and rushed simultaneously to the head of the stairs: the leaders of the flight soon gained the street; when being convinced the alarm was false, they as impetuously rushed back again;—so that a body of people among those who met the returning party were jammed in between them; and those who were behind and the torrent still continuing to pour down from the gallery, and some of them falling,—no less than eighteen human beings were almost instantaneously deprived of existence. I was dining with the mess of the first city regiment of cavalry at Kay's in Aldersgate-street, at the moment this calamity took place; and a friend, who had just witnessed the mournful catastrophe, joined the party, but, seeing me, said nothing. At six o'clock the next morning, I was called up by the bearer of the following note from my brother, without any explanation:—

"Dear Tom,

"We have sat up all night in the treasury: eighteen dead bodies are lying in the music parlour: come directly!

"C. DIBDIN."

And when I went, the scene was terrific : the relatives of the unfortunate deceased were assembling to identify their lost connexions, and to give evidence, before a coroner's jury, collected in what is now the saloon of the theatre. Other groups were demanding admission to claim remnants of wardrobe of almost every description, which were exhibited round different apartments, for the inspection of those who might have lost them in the fatal pressure of the preceding evening's crowd. Were it not completely out of place, I could state several very ludicrous circumstances which occurred among females, relative to the ownership of new pelisses, bonnets, and other articles of fashionable worth and importance. We gave three benefit nights, and expended nearly as many hundreds, in relieving suffering survivors, and prosecuting those who had caused the unfortunate tumult. Mr. Harris, on this occasion, paid me the greatest attention, inviting my wife and self, by way of change of scene, to his house, and showing numberless minute instances of friendship, which carried double and treble value from the manner in which they were conferred.

Messrs. Rankings, of the City, whose guest I had been at Kay's on the unfortunate night, and whom I have so often mentioned, as my friends, for years before, took a deep interest in our trouble.

The elder partner of the house wrote me to the subjoined effect:—

Highgate, Friday night, Oct. 16, 1807.

“ My dear Sir,

“ If my deep regret at the catastrophe of last night could at all lessen your feelings, or those of your good brother and your wives on the awful occasion,—you would indeed find relief. We were all shocked at the recital at an early hour this morning. I called at the Wells, to inquire about you, both this morning and evening, and hearing you were all at your house in Charlotte-street, would have proceeded thither, but for the lateness of the hour.

“ I expect my friend Leach (the barrister), and another gentleman or two of the law, to dine with me at Highgate, and it struck me you might, at this moment, like to pass an afternoon in a quiet party, and it would afford me infinite satisfaction to see you. There is a bed at your service, and Liberty-Hall. I have not been near your neighbourhood since your return from Cheltenham, or should have called to leave my card.

“ With best compliments to Mrs. D. believe me, my dear Sir, sincerely yours,

“ G. RANKING.”

It was this friend, who is also in my obituary, who introduced me to the Literary Fund Club, and was my proposer, on the request of Mr. Munden, for the pleasant office I held in the *Ad Libitum*.

To quit so painful a subject as the Sadler's Wells disaster, I shall re-introduce an old acquaintance to my readers.

My partners in Sadler's Wells having, notwithstanding the melancholy drawback just recorded, had a very good season, entertained a wish to purchase a few shares in the Eagle Insurance Company; and my *ci-devant* master, Sir William, being at the head of it, I wrote to him, stating our desires, and received this answer, which proves all former faults were paid for and forgiven:—

“ Dear Sir,

“ I am sorry it is not in my power to accommodate you with the thirty shares you wish for; and I assure you most seriously they have all been disposed of to the public. All those who applied the day after the books were closed, put down their names; and it since having been found, on casting up the books, there were some shares undisposed of, they were divided and

apportioned, not in the numbers wanted, but in the best way we could. If, on farther examination, we should find any yet remaining, depend on it I will endeavour to accommodate you.

“Not long since, I asked Mr. Taylor, of Covent-Garden Theatre, for a copy of a song he frequently sings, called ‘Dido,’ which, he informed me, is written by you; and that he was under an engagement not to part with it, but with your consent, which he would endeavour to obtain; but I have not heard any thing of it since, therefore suppose he has forgotten it. Will you allow me to say, I shall feel much obliged if you will send it to me; and pledge myself to state, if you wish it, that it shall go no further from me, nor any improper use be made of it, *except my singing it*. I feel great gratification in frequently reading and hearing your name mentioned with native merit and superior acquirements thereunto attaching: these are gifts rendering the name immortal of those who possess them. It appears Providence has fitted all of us for the different stations of society, according to its infinite wisdom, [mine evidently was not meant to be stationary in Moor-fields,] and with our several claims to public attention.

Our new establishment of 'the Eagle' has, as far as it has gone, obtained celebrity and approbation; and I hope we shall continue to possess your countenance and friends', as also of the public in general.

"I remain, with particular esteem, yours truly and sincerely,

"WM. RAWLINS."

Nov. 22, 1807,
Broad-street Buildings.

"Here's a simple change in a man's life!"

Young Gobbo.

If this were a novel, I should not think it moral to fancy such an alteration. Is this the master who knocked me and my poor theatre to pieces, and said I should never be worth—I won't say what?—and now he honours me by asking for "Poor Dido,"—rather too light a lady for a grave common-councilman! and in the same breath tells me, that by the infinite wisdom of Providence, the Eagle Company stands fire pretty well! The lines he most admired in "Dido" were these:—

And Æneas, not being *insured*,

Set off with his dad on his shoulders.

The arms on the seal were three cocks, and the motto "Without guile!" Great alterations since I left Moor-fields! I can only say, if they had been without "crow," they would have been very unlike our feather-beds.

CHAP. XVIII.

1807-8-9-10-11-12.

“ And from its ashes, like a phoenix, rise.”

Haymarket—“ Errors Excepted ”—Tenth campaign at Covent-Garden—“ Of Age To-morrow ”—More of “ Mother Goose ”—Mrs. Dickons—“ Two Faces under a Hood ”—“ Harlequin in his Element ”—Charles Incledon—Mr. Lewis—“ Bonifacio and Bridgetina ”—Retirement of Mrs. Mattocks—Death of Mr. Hull—Trips to Nottingham, to the West, and to Deal to act for brother Cecil—Eleventh campaign, and destruction of Covent-Garden Theatre—“ Forest of Hermanstadt,” my first and only production at the King’s Theatre—Little Theatre—Mark Lonsdale—I withdraw my wife from Covent-Garden—Destruction of Drury-Lane Theatre—His present Majesty lays the first stone of New Covent-Garden—Retirement of Mr. Lewis—New Theatre built with extraordinary celerity—Twelfth campaign at Covent-Garden—O. P. Row—“ The Jubilee ”—“ Harlequin Pedlar ”—Kind letter from Sir William—Close my annual engagement at Covent-Garden—Rural retirement—Surrey Theatre—A birth and christening—“ Up to Town ”—Conquest of Java—“ Secret Mine ”—Lyceum Theatre—Deaths of Mr. Lewis and Mr. Cumberland—Paddy Webb’s “ Rhapsody.”

“ FIVE Miles Off ” continued its run a second

season at the Haymarket, where, on the 13th of August, 1807, I brought out a new comedy called "Errors Excepted," for which I was to receive two hundred pounds, provided it should be acted nine nights.—This play was not fortunate, Mrs. Katherine Powell (widow of the gentleman for whom I formerly played Old Pickle in the "Spoiled Child" at Covent-Garden) happening to die as suddenly as her husband—that is to say, the very day after performing a principal part in the comedy; this mournful accident accelerated my play's removal from the uncertain stage where it had figured, on the sixth night after its birth. In consequence of this, I only received from the exact David Morris, Esq. the sum of one hundred and thirty-three pounds six shillings and eight pence: Mr. Colman was not pleased at this; but he had now two partners, and was therefore only a third of his former self. My farce, called "Of Age Tomorrow," was this autumn (my tenth season) successfully transplanted to Covent-Garden, where "Mother Goose" had a second run of twenty nights. As I had a new opera accepted by Mr. Harris, and we were in want of a leading singer, I strongly recommended him to engage Mrs. Dickons, who had been introduced to me by Signora Storace: I received a commission to

make the best arrangements I could between the theatre and the performer; and when the engagement was at length made, received Mr. Harris's approbation in these terms:—

Belmont, Wednesday.

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ I think you have done well with Mrs. Dickons: pray tell her I consider her as engaged for one year at the salary you name, fourteen pounds a week; and consent to her wish of being absent from the 26th of September to the 10th of October; but her Bath engagement must depend on circumstances hereafter to be considered. Pray take the trouble to tell Barlow to draw out a memorandum of the above, and get Dickons and his wife to sign it, which I will do also at the theatre on Saturday next, at three o'clock: we will then definitively settle the cast of your opera.

“ Ever truly yours,

“ T. HARRIS.”

In this opera I had the advantage of Mr. Shield's composition: he set the whole of the piece, with the exception of two airs, which Mrs. Dickons composed for herself, and a comic song sung by Mr. Fawcett, for the melody of which Mr. Shield was pleased to give me credit in his

publication of the music. The piece was played with distinguished success; I received £300 for it, and sold the copy-right to Mr. Appleyard for £60. "Harlequin in his Element, or Fire, Water, Earth, and Air," was my pantomime for Christmas (for my old engagement was renewed), and my patch-work hero met with considerable applause.

My Muse now lay fallow for many weeks, with the exception of the usual number of gratuitous benefit songs, addresses, &c. for all who asked them, among whom I see was my friend Charley Incledon. His letter is without a date, and I believe might belong to an antecedent year:—

Norwich.

"Dear Tom,

"You have, on many occasions, expressed a wish to serve me: you have it now in your power. I am much distressed for two comic songs for my new entertainment; one to be sung by an Irishman, and I should wish it complimentary to that country; the other to be sung by a funny tailor: Mr. Horn, a very clever young man now with me, will set them. We opened here on Saturday, receipts one hundred and three pounds; and I expect nearly as much this night. I shall be at Bury St. Edmunds on

Saturday and Sunday next: if you can let me have them by that time, I shall be greatly obliged to you; if not, I shall be at Lynn on the following Wednesday. With best compliments to Mrs. Dibdin, I am, dear Tom,

“Your friend,

“C. INCLEDON.”

“P. S. D—n such paper.”

I do not, at this distant period, clearly recollect whether or not I complied with the wishes of the wandering melodist; but I remember that I had promised Mr. Lewis a play for his benefit, and that several causes (not to mention severe indisposition) prevented me from fulfilling my intentions. To the excuses I wrote him on the occasion I received a kind answer,—the last I ever had the pleasure of from my much, very-much regretted manager and warm friend:—

“Dear Sir,”

“Your note should not have remained so long unacknowledged, but that I called, in expectation of seeing you yesterday, at the theatre, and also at your house, to offer you my regrets at having caused you so much trouble, and to assure you, that though I should have been much obliged by your kind assistance, I

neither do, nor ought to feel hurt at the causes which have prevented your intention, because I have many proofs you would have readily carried it into effect for me had it been practicable.

“With great truth and regard, believe me your obliged and sincere

“WM. THO. LEWIS.”

“Mrs. Lewis joins me in compliments to Mrs. Dibdin.”

17 March, 1808.

Nearly at the same time Mr. Harris junior brought a French burlesque melo-drama to my house; and not being able to see me, he left it with the following merry accompaniment:—

“You are a lazy villain, snoring in bed at this time of day! O fie, Mr. Dibdin! I have brought you a little treasure, which I request you will read and thoroughly digest by to-morrow morning, when I will call again to know your opinion of it: *mine* is that it may be made a *hard hit*. Good bye till to-morrow, at half-past eleven.

“Yours,

“H. HARRIS.”

This “*gallimathias*,” as it was styled in the title-page, pleased me very much: it was a very sensible and whimsical satire on the great rage

(then at its height) for melo-dramas, and I brought it out under the titles of "Bonifacio and Bridgetina, or the Knight of the Hermitage, or the Windmill Turret, or the Spectre of the North-East Gallery;" with a prelude, explanatory of what was to follow: the joke was not taken however, though it has since told amazingly well in another form; and, after a few nights, my bombastic hero died a natural death: I got nothing from the theatre for his short life, and lost money by printing the piece.

"The Blind Boy," a serious melo-drama by Captain Hewetson, was (as it deserved) much better received; as were Mr. Charles Kemble's "Wanderer;" "Begone Dull Care!" by Mr. Reynolds; "Who Wins, or the Widow's Choice," by Mr. Allingham; Mrs. C. Kemble's "Day after the Wedding," and "Match Making;" as well as "The Portrait of Cervantes," by (I believe) either a Mr. Greffhule, or one of Mr. Munden's family.

Mrs. Mattocks took leave of the town on the seventh of June, at the termination of a long and meritorious career; and while writing this first volume, I have heard of her death. Her last benefit was a very indifferent one, quite unworthy of this great town, which had so many years been amused by her. I was present, behind the scenes; and, on some want of attention oc-

cunning among the servants of the theatre to the proper arrangements of the evening, I heard her say with much feeling, in the words of Shakspeare,—alluding to the absence of Mr. Harris from the seat of government,—

Things are strangely alter'd in this house
Since poor JOHN OSTLER died !

There was great similarity of style in her acting to that of Mr. Lewis: they paired off nearly together; and we may not soon again witness talent so original as that which each possessed. Miss Pope and Signora Storace had left the stage a month or two previously.

In the April preceding, Mr. Hull, who had been the predecessor of Mr. Lewis as acting manager of Covent-Garden, departed this life; and never was actor more deservedly respected as a friend, a gentleman, and a scholar. From having been always deputed to address the house, both while manager and previously, he had acquired a habit of framing all his speeches, however private or familiar his audience, in the precise style of his theatrical apologies. One night of public rejoicing, he gave the mob in Martlett-court, Bow-street, where he then resided, a barrel of porter; and, mob-like, as soon as they

had drunk it, they began to break his windows in order to get more. Mr. Hull, who had been taking a moderate glass in celebration of whatever the event might have been which had called forth his liberality,—on understanding the cause of the tumult, addressed the turbulent knaves from his first-floor window, exactly in the urbane and gentlemanly tone and manner which he always so naturally assumed on the stage:—
“Ladies and gentlemen, I lament exceedingly to be under the necessity of offering an apology this evening; but I am obliged to state that all the *strong* beer has been subject to a sudden and severe attack, in consequence of which it has disappeared; and in this predicament, having, at a very short notice, procured a cask of *small*, we hope to meet with your usual indulgence.”

I was behind Covent-Garden scenes one evening in my boyhood, when a gentleman made his *début* in Othello; Mr. Hull played Gratiano. In the last scene, the new actor, naturally bewildered on such an occasion, had neglected to provide himself with a dagger with which to kill himself; and before he recollected this oversight, had got as far, in his concluding speech, as—“I took by the throat the circumcised dog,” when, almost at his wits’ end for something to “smite him” with, he looked round, saw a

drawn sword in Mr. Hull's hand, and snatched it by way of substitute for the weapon he ought to have had. It happened to be a true Toledo, and indeed a very sharp one ; and on Othello's abruptly seizing it, Mr. Hull, in most benevolent terror and agitation, losing sight of his assumed character, and anxious only for the personal safety of the *débutant*, rushed forward, seized the rapier, and exclaimed, in his richly energetic, though somewhat tremulous style of voice, —“ For God Almighty's sake, don't, sir!—it is a *real* sword!” and the curtain dropped amidst the convulsed laughter of the whole house.

In January of this year (1808), Mr. Farley accompanied us in a very pleasant trip to visit Mr. Benjamin Thompson, at Arnold, near Nottingham, where we passed a most delightful week among some of the leading families of the town and neighbourhood. In the autumn, with Mrs. Dibdin, I again went the hospitable and jovial tour of all our Somerset and Wiltshire relatives and friends ; and it was either this year, or the last, that we both went to Deal to play and exert our interests to make a good benefit for brother Cecil's wife, where our Kentish friends rallied round us in a way which proved old merry days had not escaped their kind recollections. We visited the good mayor

of Canterbury as we went down, and stopped to dine with him and his family on our journey homeward.

When Mr. Henry Harris gave me the French copy of "Bonifacio," he left with it a very pretty French melo-drame called the "Forest of Hermanstadt," which I translated, and altered to "Princess and No Princess:" it was much approved of by Mr. Harris, senior, and put into rehearsal at the re-opening of the theatre, and commencement of my eleventh year in it. The painters had just completed a most elaborate and appropriate scene of a ruined monastery, which was, as it were, built all over the stage; and I had seen it set one morning, and properly placed for rehearsal: on the same day, several whole pieces of rich velvet were brought into the theatre, and displayed on chairs in the wardrobe, that Mr. Farley and I might choose, by candle-light, a good royal purple for the robe of the princess. We left the new scenery on the stage, and the velvets in the wardrobe, on Monday, September 20th, 1808; and by nine o'clock next morning the whole edifice, and all it contained, was level with the earth, and totally reduced to ashes. It was a truly mournful circumstance, involving the lives of no less than three-and-twenty of our fellow-creatures. Co-

vent-Garden Theatre had been, for many years, an unvarying scene of prosperity, from its excellent management, and the extraordinary perseverance, probity, taste, and industry of its principal proprietor and sole conductor: — it re-appeared, to be sure, phoenix-like, from its ashes, in an incredibly short space of time; but the new theatre, born from misfortune, was nursed in fresh calamity; the ever-memorable O. P. row proving almost as destructive as another fire could have been. On the stage of this superb, but then infant edifice, I had the honour of producing the first new piece ever acted, but never heard: it might have been as good as Shakspeare's or as bad as the worst of my own, for any thing the audience knew; but O. P. and nothing but O. P. was to be listened to, and therefore the success or failure of my piece (which will be named in its place) remains completely undecided.

In one week after the fatal conflagration, the unsubdued proprietors of the Covent-Garden company opened the Opera House, where the first novelty was my “Princess and No Princess, or the Forest of Hermanstadt.” I had thus the honour of seeing my Muse on one more principal stage of the metropolis: this drama was well received, and I believe so would any thing else have been; the public being as much inclined to

sympathise with the Covent-Garden establishment then, as they were determined to damn it, and all it set before them, in the season following. Sir Lumley Skeffington soon after brought out an opera at Drury-Lane, translated from the same source with my "Princess and No Princess," and called "Ethelinde."

All the preparations of scenery, machinery, &c. of a new pantomime I had been forwarding in Covent-Garden Theatre for the ensuing Christmas, were lost in the conflagration: and when Mr. Harris removed his company from the King's Theatre in the Haymarket to Mr. Colman's, we revived "*Mother Goose*," with new scenery, and a grand representation of the ceremony of laying the first stone of Covent-Garden New Theatre; and on the whole, this third run of the lucky old hag was perhaps more profitable than a new pantomime might have proved.

While Covent-Garden Theatre was rebuilding, I received a solicitation from Mark Lonsdale, my old brother bard, and co-manager of Sadler's Wells: it is so characteristic of that most clever and strictly honest, but unfortunate artist, if I may not say *genius*, and so indicative of the vicissitudes which a man of mind and merit may experience in this best of all possible worlds—that it must plead its own apology for intrusion here. It is connected with my story as relating

to Covent-Garden ; and I only need say further, that Lonsdale had, on leaving the Wells, been (like myself) extremely unsuccessful in several fair and honourable speculations, where others had largely reaped the fruits of his industry, and he had been left to bear the consequences of disappointment :—

Greenville, 29th Jan. 1809.

“ Dear Sir,

“ From the very centre of Ireland you are addressed by one who now and then recollects with some pleasure the cheerful hours he has spent with Tom Dibdin, and who would fain believe that similar recollections now and then take place on your side of the water : be that as it may, the writer of this ventures to remind you that such a being as Mark Lonsdale is yet in existence, and hopes, ere long, to rejoin his former connexions, and to wind up his account on the scene of his once happier days, with more satisfaction than at one period of his exile he had any reason to expect.

“ In truth, my friend, I have made but a sorry business of it for these six years past, and ‘ could a tale unfold ! ’—at present, however, and for the last eighteen months, I have been comparatively comfortable, as tutor in a private family, about fifty miles from Dublin, where I teach reading, writing, arithmetic, drawing,

French, and English to three very nice young Irish ladies, and six young gentlemen, and live and lodge as well as any man in the kingdom, with the use of horses and servants in abundance, and, what is better, with the esteem of my employer and all his connexions. A situation like this, you will say, is not so bad a thing for a man who has had previous cause to complain of the world's ill usage ; but the fact is, I have a heavy account to settle with the world, which, bad as it is, holds me its debtor ; and till that debt is put in some train of liquidation, I dare not think myself happy in any situation : my pecuniary resources amount only to thirty guineas per annum where I am, and I can do nothing for my creditors in London, who, having kindly accepted a composition (furnished by a feeling and generous sister), leave me at full liberty to live where I can, undisturbed by any further claims : this circumstance binds me the more to a full discharge of every encumbrance I have been so unfortunately laid under, and I shall not cease to try for the means, at all available opportunities.

“ Having said thus much, I must now inform you, that about a month ago, I sported a letter to Mr. Kemble, enclosing some sketches of a plan for arranging the wardrobe, dressing-rooms, store-rooms, &c. of your new theatre, in

a building detached from the stage, understanding from the newspapers that some such plan was in contemplation, and having projected a similar thing for the Crow-street concern, which the eccentricity of Mr. Jones hindered from being carried into full effect. I also made an offer of my personal services to King John, as storekeeper, registrar, and overseer of the works, specifying particularly the duties I thought myself capable of undertaking in that capacity, and the savings which might thereby accrue to the theatre, without my being in any way concerned in furnishing pieces for the stage, or setting my own invention to work : for, in the first place, I think I could find employment enough without it ; and, in the next place, I am determined never to hazard my health and reputation in that department again. I have had too much wear and tear as a manager already, and am well convinced that the getting up of a single pantomime would send my shattered frame to *requiescat in pace*.

“ Respecting the success of my architectural ideas I have strong doubts, as I now understand that some progress has been made in the new building, and it is not likely that any alteration can be made in the plan ; but for my other proposal, I am still anxious about its reception. I have had no answer to my letter, and it may

possibly be a long time ere I can be favoured with one from the Great Man: would you, my dear sir, so far oblige me as to remind him of it, or to obtain for me some information on the subject, by applying for it in any way you may think proper? I think I may promise myself your co-operation in the comfortable establishment of an old fellow-labourer, and would gladly look forward to a situation in which the society of former friends and companions might again be restored to one who will always be proud to own himself,

“ Dear Sir, yours, with true sincerity,

“ M. LONSDALE.

“ Make my best remembrances to Mrs. Dibdin, and to your brother, and, if you please, to all other old friends whom I have been so long lost to. I need not add, that an answer to this, as soon as convenient, will be most welcome. Direct to me at ‘ Greenville, near Clara, King’s County, Ireland.’

“ Should I be fortunate enough to revisit London, I think I could furnish you with such a collection of materials for Irish character as would, in your hands, turn out a better Pat than any of our dramatists have yet produced on the stage. I have paid particular attention to him in all his humours; I have had many opportunities for it to the great enrichment of my common-place’

book, with a view to his appearance in the sister kingdom such as he is, not such as most writers have made him."

It may be recollected that Mr. Kemble, in his letter respecting a pantomime, inserted at the commencement of this Memoir, spoke highly of Lonsdale; but although I endeavoured, I could not renew Mr. K.'s favourable impressions.

On the 24th of Feb. 1809, a very elegant ball was given in an immense vat by the proprietors of the Golden-Lane Brewery, the company amounting to nearly one hundred and fifty people. There was an orchestra erected, and card-tables laid out, in this vast receptacle for future oceans of London porter, besides leaving room for the dancers. My wife and self were present, and were very much enjoying the liberal hospitality of our hosts, when a tremendous light was seen through the sky-lights at a great height above us. We thought at first that some fire-works, or extraordinary illuminations were intended, in aid of the *fête*; but we soon learned, to the very general regret and dismay of all present, that Drury-Lane Theatre was in flames and totally destroyed. The whole party broke up; and as we passed through part of Holborn, in our way home to Charlotte-street, Fitzroy-square, large flakes of fire actually fell upon the coach we

rode in. This calamity so soon succeeding the destruction of the rival theatre, created suspicions in many, which “fire will not melt out of *me*,” in common with some hundreds.

The grand opera of “the Exile” was the last new production at the “Great” Theatre in the Haymarket. The “little house” in the Haymarket opened on the 5th of December with the “Mountaineers,” and a new posthumous farce called “A School for Authors,” by the late Mr. Tobin. To lessen the inconvenience, as much as possible, of want of room at this theatre, all gratuitous free-admissions were temporarily suspended; but the old *order* of things was soon again resorted to.

The first stone of the new Covent-Garden Theatre was laid by His present Majesty on the last day of the year 1808, with attendant circumstances of truly royal and masonic splendour; and the present theatre, in spite of every difficulty, opened at the usual period of commencement in 1809. The new pieces at Mr. Colman’s house played by Mr. Harris’s company, were, “Is he a Prince?” by the author of the “Portrait of Cervantes;” “Independence,” a comedy, by the late Mr. Allingham, to which I furnished the prologue: and on Monday, May 29th, Mr. Lewis took leave of the public. It is a great satisfaction to recollect that this gentleman, who

brought up a large family, and lived with hospitable liberality, left upwards of sixty thousand pounds to his widow and children. His last performance at Covent-Garden was the Copper Captain; and, in his parting address, he prided himself on having to say, that “during thirty-six years in that theatre, he never had once been so unfortunate as to incur the disapprobation of his public patrons.”

At the close of this season I withdrew Mrs. Dibdin from the stage. My Muse was inactive till the opening of the new theatre, when, under the unfortunate circumstances of the O. P. row, I produced, on the 25th of October, 1809, an entertainment, already alluded to, called “the Jubilee,” in celebration of His late Majesty’s completing the fiftieth year of his reign. This first “piece of service,” as Scrub says, of my twelfth season with Mr. Harris, was useless both to him and myself, though it did some good to others, having been first acted for the benefit of persons confined for small debts. I however took courage, and completed for Christmas my pantomime of “Harlequin Pedlar, or the Magic Well;” and *well* it turned out, considering the humour the town was in.

No other novelty appeared till February, 1810, when Mr. Reynolds’s “Free Knights” were well received; “The Budget of Blunders,”

a farce by Mr. Greffhule ; and a comedy, called “ How to Please and How to Teaze,” were all the ventures any author could be found to put to sea during this truly stormy season, with the exception of a play, called “ the Widow’s only Son,” acted but one night. “ Mother Goose” was (a fourth season) again performed many times, and my “ Harlequin Pedlar” had to boast of no less than fifty-two successful representations.

In the course of this year, I applied to my *ci-devant* master, Sir William, in behalf of a worthy old friend, for a situation in the Strand Bridge establishment, and was not a little proud to find, by the worthy knight’s answer, that I continued in his good graces : he says,—

“ Dear Sir,

“ I was duly favoured with your esteemed recommendation of Mr.——. Be assured, I shall have pleasure in paying attention to your request ; and, as far as I can, I will give him my support ; and if his success depended on my good wishes and exertions, rest assured your friend should have the preference. Your song of ‘ Dido’ has not gone out of my possession ; and I shall feel an additional obligation if you will favour me with the song you wrote for Mr. Taylor, relative to Bonaparte’s marriage with the Princess of Austria. It affords me infinite

satisfaction, whenever I hear your name mentioned, to find it coupled with honourable conduct; that you live in the estimation of your friends, and respected by the world in general: this is truly gratifying. Your good sense will, I am sure, excuse this digression, and place it to the account of my best wishes for your happiness in life.

“ I remain, dear sir, yours very truly,

“ W^M. RAWLINS.”

“ P. S. When you come to this part of the town, do me the favour to look in, and say, ‘ How d’ye do?’ ”

As Henderson said, in the anecdote already told,—“ I can’t help it,”—but I am proud of this letter; and if my poor dear dead uncle Cecil could have seen it before he died, *i. e.* before it was written,—I am sure he would have left me a better legacy.

When I produced “ the Jubilee ” at Covent-Garden, Mrs. Dibdin was at Cheltenham, where I joined her, and we made another visit to our west-country friends. The administration of Covent-Garden being now completely altered, I finished my engagement with that theatre at the end of this season, on the most amicable terms; and having, on account of family ill health, and a partiality for the country, bought the lease of a

very retired and picturesque cottage near Betchworth in Surrey,—I sold the lease of my house in London, and retired to my Lilliputian Tusculum, meaning to work more at leisure than amid the club dinners and bustle of town, and bring my wares occasionally for sale to London. Here I began to write my “Metrical History of England;” here I had occasionally the pleasure of seeing Messrs. Colman, Bannister, Fladgate, Farley, Braham, and Madame Storace; Messrs. Arnold, Elliston, and very many other highly respectable friends in private life. My cottage stood in a place rural and retired in the extreme; and I gave my London acquaintance a portrait of it in a rather well-known song, since purchased by Clementi and Co. and beginning

Two-and-twenty miles from town.

One of my visitors, (an actor of eminence,) not being fond of rurality himself, felt so sure I should soon dislike retirement, that he said he should find me, on his next visit, suspended to a tree, and labelled—

“Here lies Tom Dibdin, who died of ‘the country.’”

Had this curious *hic jacet* been composed by an Hibernian, it would have been well enough; as it was, I might have added—

Your style of epitaph is new:

It is n't *Tom* that *lies*, but *you*.

The same friend desired to hear part of my manuscript “Metrical History of England,” which he was pleased to approve, till I came to the Heptarchy, and recited the following (of course intended) anachronisms:—

The newspaper, when things unkindly went,
Announces,—“The ambassador from Kent,
Having received a warm official note,
Has left this country in a Gravesend boat:
The ESSEX envoy too has turn’d his back,
And quits the kingdom in a neutral hack;
Attended by a confidential friend,
Whose passport goes no further than Mile End:
Bold SUSSEX, in a diplomatic rage,
Departs to-morrow in the Brighton stage;
While great EAST ANGLIA, foaming like a dragon,
Has taken places in the Norwich waggon.”

The gentleman assured me this would not do; “for,” added he, “it must, by some means, have escaped your recollection, that at the period of the Heptarchy, there were neither newspapers nor hackney coaches!!”

Mr. Elliston, who was playing with great success at the Surrey Theatre, asked me to put Garrick’s “Jubilee” into verse for him: he sent it in a letter, and had it back (as usual) by “return of post.” This led eventually to my engaging with him, as author and manager of the Surrey Theatre, at a salary of fifteen pounds

per week and a benefit; but first I stated my intentions by letter to Mr. Harris, that there might be no drawback to my occasionally writing for Covent-Garden. Mr. Harris wrote, as under, his approval of my acceptance of the engagement:—

Belmont, Sunday.

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ You were right in your conjecture: the note written to you, and which was by mistake sent to Mr. Wallis, was only to assure you that I am too sincerely your friend to wish to stand in the way of any purpose of yours that may be for your advantage. Are we to expect any thing from you, in the shape of comedy or opera, for the early part of the approaching season?

“ Ever truly yours,

“ T. HARRIS.”

I immediately commenced operations at the Surrey with a most successful pantomime, called “ Harlequin Basket-Maker.” Mrs. Dibdin, about the same time, presented me with another production in the form of a very fine boy, who is now five feet ten high, though but sixteen years of age. I believe I have mentioned that we had lost all our girls; and, of course, this incident

was made matter of rejoicing : among others, in a very pleasant party at the christening, were Messrs. Colman and Elliston, who were god-fathers on the occasion ; and during the evening I happened to mention that my near neighbour, a Farmer Waterer, since dead, who had encouraged me, with permission of the adjacent copyholders, to enclose a small piece of ground from Gadbrook Common, to add to my little garden,—had afterwards, *sub rosa*, advised the lord of the manor to make me give it back again. The farmer, with whom I had subsequently shaken hands, was at that moment under my roof ; but my two indignant gossips, without a word to me, sallied forth, and, in the warm zeal of their friendship, broke every window in the said farmer's house, which of course I had to pay for.

I brought out at the Surrey, this year, “The Lady of the Lake,” the very ample success of which so pleased Mr. Elliston, that he said I was a “god-send” to him and his theatre. I next produced for him the melo-dramatic burletta, in two acts, of the “Harper's Son and the Duke's Daughter.” But to return to older friends.

Mr. Harris, some time prior to this, having, rather in haste, requested me to write him an

opera,—I, for expedition, altered a five-act comedy I had just before sent him ; in answer to which information Mr. H. writes—

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ I am glad you have transformed your comedy, and am in great hopes you will make a successful opera of it. Never mind the songs ; send me the drama as completed, this week, if possible. I heartily wish Mrs. Dibdin and your Muse a happy delivery.

“ Ever yours truly,

“ T. HARRIS.”

He almost directly wrote again :—

Belmont.

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ I am very desirous to see your new piece as soon as you can ; therefore I propose that you and Mrs. D. should come and take a dinner with us on Sunday ; but previously strive hard to let me have the piece the Friday preceding ; and then, if you will be here by one or two on Sunday, I shall be competent to discuss with you : your friend Henry will be here to meet you. With sincere compliments to Mrs. Dibdin, I remain always

“ Yours most truly,

“ T. HARRIS.”

I sent the opera, as requested; but Mr. H. had forgotten that my wife was not equal to a journey of sixteen miles to a dinner party; therefore I apologised; and Mr. Harris's reply conveyed rather an ill-omened opinion of my opera:—

Belmont.

“Dear Dibdin,

“We expected the pleasure of seeing you and Mrs. Dibdin here, and were sorry you could not come. I have no doubt we shall do very well with *this* opera; but, for your own sake as well as ours, set about another with all convenient speed; and if you could, consistently with your other engagements, I would thank you much for the skeleton of the plan for a pantomime not to be known as yours.* We have got a new man, (Mr. Sinclair,) from whose vocal abilities we expect much: I mean to bring him out in your opera, which will occasion much alteration, about which we will consult. Best compliments to Mrs. D.

“Ever truly yours,

“T. HARRIS.”

This opera was called “Up to Town,” and by no means met with the success I had hoped:

* This mysterious sort of arrangement I always resisted.

Mr. Harris had nearly left off attending rehearsals; Mr. Lewis was gone; and I was ready to repeat the exclamatory quotation of Mrs. Mattocks, "Things are strangely altered," &c. I received but £50 for this opera.

I now turned all my attention to my "History of England," management of the Surrey Theatre, and pieces I had engaged to write for it. From this time, until the autumn of 1812, (about one year,) I wrote and brought out, at Mr. Elliston's theatre, "What's a Stage without Horses?" a prelude; "Blood will have Blood, an operatic melo-drame in three acts;" "America," a melo-drame in three acts; "The Colossus, or Harlequin and the Seven Wonders;" and another pantomime called "Mirth and Harlequin:" besides which, I altered and put entirely into metre, "The Cabinet," "Il Bondocani," "Lodoiska," "Peeping Tom," "Tag in Tribulation," "Five Miles Off," "Harlequin's Invasion," "Fontainebleau," and "The Mayor of Garratt:" this was hard work, but I had my fifteen pounds per week and two very good benefits; on my first, more than 1500 persons in the pit; and after paying seventy guineas expenses, received about one hundred and seventy more. In 1812, however, I found I had been too much the spoiled child of Mr. Harris to

go on well with my new manager, and therefore took leave of the Surrey; in doing which, for the present, I beg it to be understood, that whatever differences of opinion at that time, and since at Drury-Lane, might have existed between Mr. Elliston and myself, I shall always feel happier in recollecting kindnesses than circumstances of an opposite nature: I have already inserted one very friendly note of my *ci-devant* employer, and think the following does him as much honour as the receipt of it afforded pleasure to myself:—

“Dear Dibdin,

“Whenever I meet any of the trustees I grow angry, and get—*Nemo omnibus horis sapit*. The recollection of the morning makes one blush for the events of the evening; I wish therefore to forget what passed between us, as I have no doubt but I was harsh, and unjust. Think therefore that I am, in my best moments, yours sincerely and affectionately,

R. W. E.”

That I quitted the Surrey at my own request, will appear from what may be termed Mr. Elliston’s friendly farewell answer to my proposed resignation:—

Surrey Theatre, July 24th, 1811.

“Dear Dibdin,

“As I intend to accept your pro-

posed resignation at the close of the Haymarket Theatre, it will be unnecessary for me to have my intended explanation. There is in my mind nothing in our differences, that need leave a hostile impression upon the feelings of either: in our progress through life we may yet be mutually useful to each other, and I beg you to believe that I am still, and ever desire to be, your well-wisher and friend,

“ R. W. ELLISTON.”

Thos. Dibdin, Esq.

Very shortly after, I received a communication, which threw me once more actively into the arms of the “ Great Grand Theatres,” but which is of sufficient importance to reserve till the next volume.

In the mean time, Mr. Harris’s second son had been eminently distinguished, as a captain in the navy, (of the *Sir Francis Drake*,) at the conquest of Java, which I thought might form the groundwork of a melo-dramatic piece; and though I was then busy with a farce for Covent-Garden, I wrote on the subject to Mr. Harris, and was answered—

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ I think your plan for an exhibition of ‘ Java ’ a very happy one: Fawcett is at work on

something for the equestrians, and he is acquainted with what they can perform. I shall send him your sketch, and I wish you could come to town, and consult with him thereon, as soon as you can conveniently, for we have not an hour to lose. If your farce is not finished, pray lay it by for the present, and let us stick wholly to the 'Java' business.

"Yours very truly,

"T. HARRIS."

"P. S. (in another hand, and rather indicative of the difficulty of pleasing more than one theatrical master) Dear Dibdin, I hope you have finished the farce, as now is the only time to produce it.

"Yours,

"H. HARRIS."

After this, I wrote all the songs, and half a piece, (Mr. Fawcett writing the other half,) called "The Secret Mine:" in this case too I was desired to let some one else pass as the author. The piece, after being acted many score times at Covent-Garden, was transferred, by permission, (at the end of a year or two's service,) to Astley's Amphitheatre; and here I got a fall,

from being placed in the vulgar predicament of a seat between two stools. Having made no bargain with Mr. Fawcett, or with the theatre, I was, on the success of the piece, referred by each to the other; and receiving no remuneration, I am the only one concerned who shared not of the riches of a mine, productive at two theatres, but of which the treasures have remained to me a secret till this day.

There were other old friends of the major establishments too, from whose recollection the obscurity of minor clouds had not quite obliterated the occasional assistance to be derived from my humble pen; *exempli gratia* :—

Lyceum, February 20th.

“Dear Dibdin,

“Will you, my good fellow! write an epilogue for our next new comedy? It will be brought out on Saturday, March 2d. It is Miss * * * * *’s,—a worthy clever girl: Mrs. Glover is to speak it; and you know it cannot be in better hands. Favour me with an answer by return, and believe me, my dear D.

“Yours truly,

“I. G. RAYMOND.”

This authoress had brought a play out before

at Drury-Lane entirely through my introduction, after it had been refused by Mr. Harris, and I had written either prologue or epilogue, if not both, for it. Lavish praise had been bestowed, in a preface, on many personages who had less to do with the matter; while forgetting her brother author, who not only, through his friend Bannister, had been the means of producing the comedy, but had actually cut, and altered, and suggested something material in every act of it,—the authoress, who had heretofore come to me almost daily for advice and assistance, never, after the hour of success, approached me, till two years afterwards. The present exigency reminded her I was alive; and the above indirect application from herself came through the medium of the Lyceum stage manager. My answer by return, as requested, was nothing but the desired epilogue: how far it was satisfactory the next note will decide:—

Lyceum, Monday.

“ Dear Dibdin,

“ You are what you always were,—a good fellow. I am much obliged to you; Mr. Arnold is much obliged to you; and the authoress ought to kneel to you [a lady! mercy forbid!]. Your epilogue is very excellent indeed;

and, under every circumstance of anxiety and trouble on your own account, this theatre is highly indebted to your kindness.

“I am, dear Dibdin, yours truly,

“I. G. RAYMOND.”

Ecce iterum Crispinus!

“My dear Dibdin,

“Will you, my dear fellow! oblige us by writing a comic song for Lovegrove? We are thus circumstanced: the farce is Pocock’s; he is in Liverpool; and we want a song even before the post could return from thence: if it is only two verses, be a good fellow, and do it. Lovegrove shall call and tell you the nature and situation of the character. The title of the farce is ‘The Green-Eyed Monster.’ Say yes or no by bearer: the last you never said in your life.

“Yours truly,

“I. G. RAYMOND.”

In 1811 Mr. Lewis died, and two months after the veteran Cumberland “shuffled off this mortal coil.” Mr. Cumberland made me a present, many years back, of an original manuscript farce of his writing, meant, at the moment, to satirise the absurdity of the red-hot French ideas of equality. I prize the piece as a relic of the ta-

lented author by whom it was given me ; but I fear its success on the stage, even during the peculiar time it was written for, would have been very doubtful.

In the course of the last year, during my hours of relaxation, I wrote an evening's entertainment, including twelve new Irish songs, and the whole of the colloquial part written in the Irish accent, for a provincial comic Hibernian well known as Paddy Webb, who soon gave the songs notoriety, particularly the comic planxty of Darby Kelly. I forget what remuneration I was to receive for it ; but Mr. Webb was so well pleased with the whole of the " Irishman's Rhapsody," as it was christened,—that (being a hatter,) he sent me a very handsome cover for the head that had produced it, in addition to the *douceur* agreed on.

As my father used to say between the acts of his entertainments at *Sans Souci*,—" I shall claim permission for a moment's pause." If you tire at the end of this stage, reader ! I shall only observe, from my friend Colman's letter, *tant pis pour moi*, and, I hope, (an odd hope !) *pour vous* ; for, as Sir Hugh Evans says,—

There is pippins and cheese to come, look you !

What may be thought of my first volume, I

cannot guess: it contains nothing but truth, however tiresome that truth may be: it is a plodding progressive history; but the scene lies on ground interesting to many, and among personages interesting to many more; and if any thing good may be looked for between two extremes, there is at least plenty of room for it in a volume that begins with "Garrick," and ends with "Mother Goose."

END OF VOL. I.

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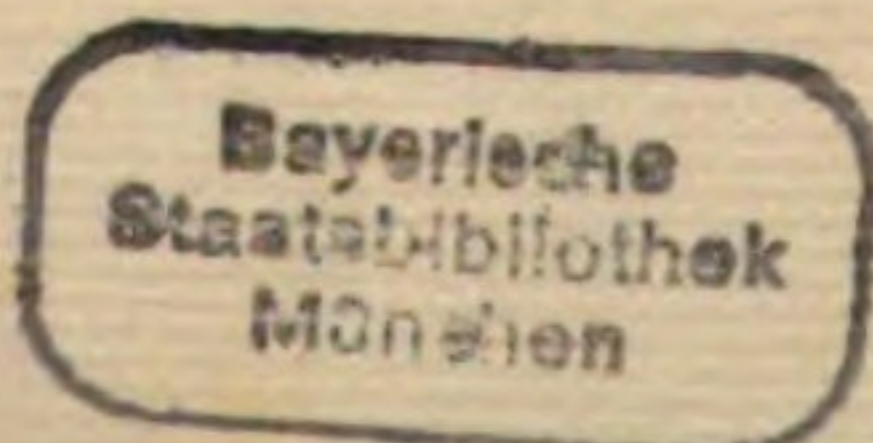
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